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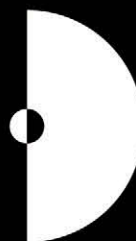
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GRAMOPHONE



RECORDINGS & EVENTS *A special eight-page section for readers in the US and Canada*

GRAMOPHONE *talks to...*

Canadian composer Paul Dolden...

...about The Un-Tempered Orchestra and Who Has the Biggest Sound?

Who Has the Biggest Sound? is the most substantial of the two pieces on the CD...

In this work, I go on a journey around the world, looking for sounds produced by insects and animals. Who has the most beautiful melody? Who can play the fastest? I found a direct relationship between animals of a specific geographical region and the unique music style from that area – for example, when it's slowed down, the rhythm of crickets matches flamenco and other Latin rhythms; the rhythm and pitch-bend of barnyard animals matches country and western music. This project suggests that humans hold their musical creative abilities in too high an esteem.

One wouldn't necessarily think you were always using sounds from nature...

I didn't want a nature-sounding work – you should only hear pure music. But what you are in fact hearing is the sound of insects and animals translated on to musical instruments, and into a musical structure we can understand.

Are the sounds electronically generated?

All my music is based on the live performance of instruments. Musicians are hired and

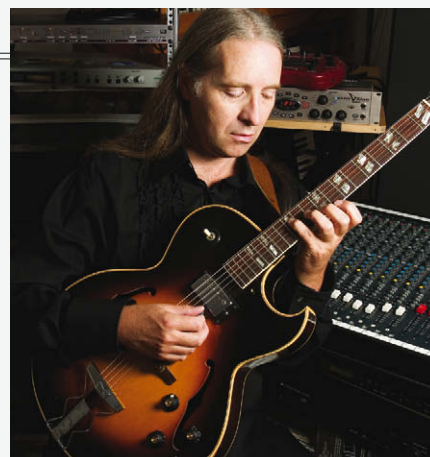
recorded one at a time – although I play all my own string parts, from violin to double bass, from banjo to electric guitar. I then do whatever editing is needed before mixing all the tracks together. On average, my 'virtual orchestra' comprises 400 members, and the size of different sections changes within a piece or even within an individual movement.

What's The Un-Tempered Orchestra about?

Part of my ongoing quest since the 1980s has been to make us feel vibrations or music in a different way. I find our tuning system quite ugly and its vibrational combinations a cliché. I use the recording studio to create vibration or frequency patterns that you cannot achieve with conservatory-trained musicians in the concert hall. In this particular piece, I'm fascinated with non-octave tuning systems and the emotions and colours they create. When there are no octaves, it forces the ear to feel new sensations.

What are your musical influences?

I listen to all types of music from across the world and these genres are put through a huge 'Dolden filter' when I sit down to write.



Who Has the Biggest Sound? is a piece in which I most directly mimic the colours and gestures of other genres – country, rock, Latin, Baroque – although this has a lot to do with the musical material that the insects gave me! But the work isn't simply a pastiche of styles, as each section is united by the use of the same melodic and harmonic material.

What can your music offer traditionalists?

Classical listeners may be turned off by the distorted guitars and pounding drums but an 'ideal listener' will be open-minded enough to join me on a journey into microtonal heavy-metal hell and through to sustained, blissful, consonant choirs accompanied by soft instrumental sounds. I believe this 'ideal listener' exists in the mind of every artist.

Averitt

Afro-American Fragments. The Deepness of the Blue. The Dream Keeper

Lee Thompson, Melissa Loehnig pf

Conservatory Singers / Robert Bode

MSR Classics © MS1509 (47' • DDD)

Recorded live at the White Recital Hall, James

C Olson Performing Arts Center, University

of Missouri-Kansas City, February 24, 2013



William Averitt (b1948) was on the faculty at the Shenandoah Conservatory in

Winchester, Virginia, for almost 40 years, and these three cycles for chorus and piano four hands, to poems and lyrics by Langston Hughes on three different aspects of the American experience, show the soft-spoken flexibility, skill and eloquence such a pedigree bespeaks.

Instead of illustrating Hughes's words with his music, Averitt shapes, modulates and manipulates the underlying pulse and contributions from pianists Lee Thompson and Melissa Loehnig to support the choral lines with ambient schemes of colour and mood. On their own these musical effects might go unnoticed but combined with the powerful imagery of the poetry they conjure

up complex, conflicted emotional experiences over which the choral lines lay out like in a dream.

The Conservatory Singers, composed primarily of graduate students, handle the demanding choral writing with appropriately youthful charm and energy, and the results are mutually beneficial. 'My Loves', the second of the five poems about young love set in *The Deepness of the Blue*, is hypnotic, exquisite. 'Dream Variations', the second number of four about race and pride set in *The Dream Keeper*, is a thrilling exercise in spiralling virtuosity; the final number, a five minute incongruous ditty called 'Song', is a guaranteed encore.

Celebrating **LEONARD SLATKIN**

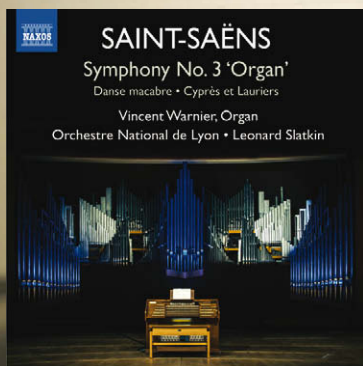
“Slatkin is brilliant not only as a conductor but as an educator as well.”

THE WASHINGTON POST

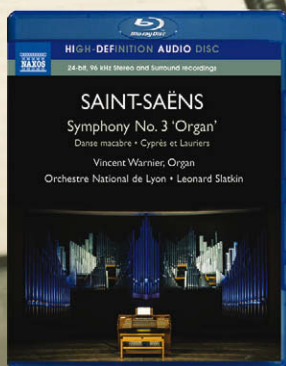
“Leonard Slatkin is a master when it comes to [creating] a real musical atmosphere.”

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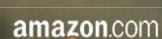
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In his booklet-notes, Averitt cites a variety of American cultural influences and describes the resulting musical treatment as including 'wild, pounding, syncopated and violent perpetual motion'. Recorded live in concert at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, the sound is best when the Conservatory Singers raise their energy level to match the pianists. **Laurence Vittes**

Daugherty • Shostakovich

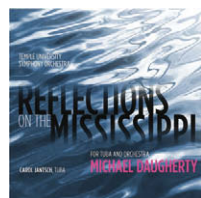
Daugherty Reflections on the Mississippi^a

Shostakovich Symphony No 9, Op 70

^aCarol Jantsch tuba Temple University

Symphony Orchestra / Luis Biava

BCM&D Records © (50' • DDD)



Michael Daugherty composes music full of cultural allusions, as well as wit, energy and poetry. Many of these qualities can be found in *Reflections on the Mississippi*, his concerto for tuba and orchestra, which paints scenes of Daugherty's experiences as a boy and responses to literary sources inspired by the river. It is a sweet and fervent work – four movements that evoke nostalgic images through the tender and acrobatic voice of the tuba in friendly alliance with glistening orchestral sonorities.

Each movement bears a title that suggests a specific atmosphere or emotion: 'Mist', 'Fury', 'Prayer' and 'Steamboat'. Daugherty's skill as a composer who embraces myriad styles can be heard as he makes nuanced use of jazz and folk traditions. The finale, a tribute to Mark Twain, has the rambunctious feel of one of the writer's novels leaping from the page (and stage). The world-premiere recording features Carol Jantsch, Principal Tuba of the Philadelphia Orchestra, who brings expressive beauty and nimble grace to the solo part. The Temple University Symphony Orchestra and conductor Luis Biava collaborate seamlessly with their guest.

In an interesting bit of programming, Daugherty's score is paired with Shostakovich's sunny Symphony No 9, which veers markedly from the Russian composer's dramatic and sardonic works in the genre. Biava shapes a buoyant and detailed performance, revelling in the cheeky pages, moments of tenderness and explosive passages that could only have come from the mind of this 20th-century maverick. The orchestra sounds wired but disciplined, eager to balance caprice with finesse.

Donald Rosenberg

Dolden

Who Has the Biggest Sound?

The Un-Tempered Orchestra

Paul Dolden *elecs*

Starkland © ST220 (71' • DDD)



For his first new recording in nine years, and 20 years after his breakthrough

two-CD set, *L'ivresse de la vitesse*, which *The Wire* listed as 'one of the top 100 recordings of the 20th century', Montreal-based Paul Dolden reportedly spent 8000 hours in the studio preparing his electroacoustic works *Who Has the Biggest Sound?* (2005-08) and *The Un-Tempered Orchestra* (2010) by layering together hundreds of studio hours of live, acoustic recordings, complete with the composer's own narration at some points.

It's easy enough to throw the resulting 71 minutes into your daily mix at what seems like a reasonable volume level and let it buzz randomly and pleasantly through your daily soundscape. It's only when you crank up the volume, however, that the impact of Dolden's conceptual juxtapositioning, combined with the stunning spatial precision of the recording, begins to cook.

At times the ideas are so refreshing that they tumble over themselves in almost gleeful haste. And the strong theatrical flow of the 15 tracks of *Who Has the Biggest Sound?* seem to group themselves into a series of larger episodes – most notably the rambunctious energy of 'The Saddle Song' and 'My Hound is Out of Harmony', and an absorbing trio of Village Orchestra dance experiments – before concluding inevitably with a track of 'More Unanswered Questions'.

For the six tracks of *The Un-Tempered Orchestra*, despite the occasionally awesome dimensions of its super calliope-sized sound, the nature of Dolden's philosophical conceit would seem to require close, intimate attention to nuances at those tightly squeezed intersections where space and intonation collide.

Laurence Vittes

Hétu

String Quartets – No 1, Op 19; No 2, Op 50.

Scherzo, Op 54. Adagio and Rondo, Op 3 No 1a.

Sérénade, Op 45^a. Sextet, Op 71^b

New Orford Quartet with ^aTimothy Hutchins *fl*

^bSteven Dann *va* ^bColin Carr *vc*

Naxos Canadian Classics © 8 573395 (74' • DDD)



Rooted in the musical worlds of Laval, Montreal and Quebec Universities, the music

of Jacques Hétu (1938-2010) spanned the five decades of his career; in each, as showcased on this disc, his characteristic core of integrity and ear for beauty became more intrinsically arresting over time.

His First Quartet (1972) reflects the virtues of the academic life. Hétu's command of form and narrative is strong and pleasing, with splendid echoes of Britten's Second Quartet and, at the opening of the *tour de force* fugal last movement, of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*. There is something similarly serious yet olympian (and occasionally even rustic) about Hétu's Second Quartet, written 20 years later, but the language has deepened; in memory of the composer's mother, the last movement features a lovely, consoling cello solo which Hétu folds, against a faint chorale, into the music's embrace.

The ease and skill with which Hétu handled edgy harmonic astringencies in the diverting Rondo of 1960 did not lead him down radical paths; he preferred fashioning more conventional gems such as the ingenious *Scherzo* (1992) or the exquisite 'Nocturne' from a stars-over-moonlit-Belmont *Sérénade* (1988), based on Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

The excellent New Orford Quartet, all principals in the Toronto and Montreal Symphonies, are joined by viola player Steven Dann and cellist Colin Carr for the 12-minute long Sextet (2004), Hétu's last music for strings, written six years before his death, whose quiet reflections and inner intensities serve as an eloquent musical valedictory.

Laurence Vittes

Paulus

Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra, 'Three Places of Enlightenment'^a. To Be Certain of the Dawn – Weil of Tears^b.

Grand Concerto for Organ and Orchestra^c

^aJun Iwasaki, ^aCarolyn Wann Bailey *vns*

^aDaniel Reinker *va* ^aAnthony La Marchina *vc*

^cNathan J Laube *org* Nashville Symphony

Orchestra / Giancarlo Guerrero

Naxos American Classics © 8 559740 (57' • DDD)

Recorded live at Laura Turner Hall, Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville, TN, ^{ab}October 4-6, 2012; ^cOctober 4-5, 2013

NAXOS

MARIA LUIGIA BORSI

LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA • YVES ABEL

“...Maria Luigia Borsi's clean, fresh and fleshy lyric soprano proves well suited... (Respighi's *Il tramonto*)” ★★★★★
BBC Music Magazine (CD review - "Italian Soprano Arias")

“Maria Luigia Borsi's 'Willow Song' was one of those moments that is remembered forever - one in which time is suspended. She sings remarkably...her tone is one of mysterious beauty.”
Le Monde (*Otello*: Salzburg Festival)

“From her entrance (complete with an ecstatic high D-flat), she commanded the stage.”
Opera News (*Madama Butterfly*: Cincinnati Opera)



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Joyous song: members of the Yale Schola Cantorum rehearse for their live performance at Christ Church Episcopal, recorded for Delos



How poignant this release turns out to be: it arrived soon after the death in October of the American composer at the age of 65. But the recording isn't a memorial. It's a testament to the range, craftsmanship and accessibility that enabled Paulus to be one of the few contemporary composers who made a living entirely by writing music.

The three works performed here by the Nashville Symphony under Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero couldn't be more alike or more different. They demonstrate Paulus's spirited and lyrical inventiveness within tonal boundaries, even as they inhabit diverse sound worlds. The Concerto for string quartet and orchestra, subtitled *Three Places of Enlightenment*, goes well beyond solving the challenge of balances between the small and large ensembles. The score is an outpouring of dramatic contrasts, with the quartet members conversing soulfully among themselves when not in conflict or vibrant accord with the orchestra. Guerrero and the Nashville musicians make a sonorous feast of the work, with principal players Jun Iwasaki and Carolyn Wann Bailey (violins), Daniel Reinker (viola) and Anthony LaMarchina (cello) contributing superbly as soloists and en masse.

Paulus is in a reflective mood in the touching *Veil of Tears* for string orchestra, and alternately majestic and impish in the *Grand Concerto* for organ and orchestra. The latter gives performers many opportunities to bask in luxurious, piquant and subtle colours, and that is what the Nashville forces, with a charismatic organist, do to vital effect. Turn up the volume in the finale and savour the sonic splendour. **Donald Rosenberg**

'Sing, ye birds, a joyous song'

'Music of the English Renaissance and 20th Century'

RR Bennett *The Glory and the Dream*^a

Gibbons *Glorious and powerful God*^b

Second Evening Service^b **Tallis** *Te lucis ante terminum* **Taverner** *Mass, 'Western Wynde'*

Yale Schola Cantorum / Simon Carrington with

^a**Thomas Murray**, ^b**Lucas Wong** *org*

Delos © DE3458 (66' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at Christ Church Episcopal, New Haven, CT, January 23, 2010



The members of Yale Schola Cantorum sound mesmerised by the music they're singing here, and so should anyone who hears these performances of works from the English Renaissance and 20th century. As led

by Simon Carrington, the choir's founder and a co-founder of The King's Singers, the Yale ensemble bring tonal beauty and seamless interweaving of lines to a panoply of reverent and rapturous duties. The disc was recorded in performance at Christ Church Episcopal in New Haven, CT – an acoustical space that appears ideal for voices to soar without blurring words.

The recording takes its title from the fourth section of Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's *The Glory and the Dream*, set to William Wordsworth's 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood'. Bennett, one of the most skilled chameleons in music, set the verses with consummate attention to expressive meaning. The writing is lyrical and vibrant, warm in harmony and richly coloured in its melding of chorus and organ (here played with luminous finesse by Thomas Murray). Carrington's judicious and flexible pacing heightens the score's delights.

The same can be said of the performances of music by John Taverner, Orlando Gibbons and Thomas Tallis. The Yale singers manage the long lines in Taverner's *Western Wynde* Mass with as much unpressured ease as they clarify the polyphonic activity in Gibbons's *Glorious and powerful God* and Second Evening Service (both with fine soloists). Tallis's *Te lucis ante terminum* proves a suitably glowing finale.

Donald Rosenberg

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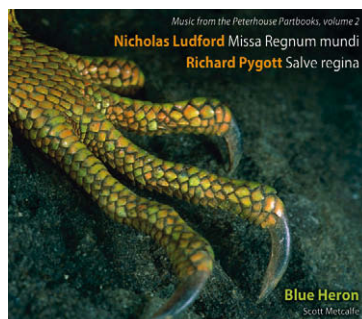


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D. JAMES ROSS, **EARLY MUSIC REVIEW**



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VOLUME IV

Robert Jones
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THE SCENE

Among the highlights this month are the world premieres of two operas: *Enemies, A Love Story* by Ben Moore at Palm Beach Opera and Kevin Puts's *The Manchurian Candidate* for Minnesota Opera

DETROIT, MI

Detroit Symphony Orchestra

Olga Kern plays Tchaikovsky's piano concertos (February 13-22)

The Detroit Symphony is braving the winter by diving into three weeks of Tchaikovsky, with maestro Leonard Slatkin leading this reinvigorated orchestra in six symphonies, three concertos and other orchestral selections. The guest soloist here is the Russian-born pianist Olga Kern, who often seems to have a direct line to the great Russian masters. In this series she tackles all three piano concertos (though, fortunately for her, on separate weekends).

dso.org

PALM BEACH, FL

Palm Beach Opera

***Enemies, A Love Story* (February 20-22)**

Palm Beach Opera may not be a household name when it comes to opera companies – although it's been around since 1961 – but that hasn't stopped it from commissioning and presenting its first-ever world premiere: *Enemies, A Love Story*. The opera – based on the acclaimed novel by Isaac Bashevis Singer – is a work composed by Ben Moore with a libretto by Nahma Sandrow. It tells the story of Herman Broder, a Holocaust survivor living in New York City in the late 1940s, and the complications that ensue due to his overlapping relationships with three different women. Canadian bass-baritone Daniel Okulitch stars in the lead role alongside mezzo Leann Sandel-Pantaleo, with David Stern conducting the Palm Beach Opera Chorus and Orchestra.

pbopera.org

NEW YORK, NY

Carnegie Hall

Leif Ove Andnes plays Beethoven's piano concertos (February 23, 25)

Pianist Leif Ove Andnes has been on a self-described 'Beethoven journey' for the last few years, a journey that has allowed this subtle and sparkling Norwegian musician to immerse himself in all things Beethoven on the piano. A milestone in this journey must be these performances at Carnegie Hall where, over the course of two evenings, he performs all five of the composer's piano concertos,

EVENT OF THE MONTH

The Manchurian Candidate in rehearsal



MINNESOTA

Minnesota Opera

***The Manchurian Candidate* (March 7-15)**

Composer Kevin Puts won the Pulitzer Prize for his first opera, *Silent Night*, a work based on the famous Christmas ceasefire during the First World War that received its world premiere in November 2011 at the Minnesota Opera in Saint Paul. Now the composer returns with his second opera (and the same librettist, Mark Campbell), *The Manchurian Candidate*, based on the 1959 novel by Richard Condon. The book – which has twice been made into a movie – tells the story of a decorated American soldier who is brainwashed into becoming an assassin to bring down the government. This heady mix of politics and paranoia is the product of Minnesota Opera's New Works Initiative, designed to bring exciting new work to the opera stage.

mnopera.org

leading the Mahler Chamber Orchestra from the piano.

carnegiehall.org

SAINT PAUL, MN

Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

Opening the new Ordway hall (March 5, 6)

To celebrate the March 2015 opening of its new \$75m concert hall in Saint Paul, the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts has programmed a wide range of artists (from Broadway, to world music, to the classical arts). That said, the primary occupants of the Ordway Center include

both the Minnesota Opera (see Event of the Month) and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. The SPCO feature in a concert series early in the month, playing a chamber version of Shostakovich's String Quartet No 3, opening with Rossini's Overture to *The Barber of Seville*, and closing with Mozart's Symphony No 41, *Jupiter*.

thespc.org

LAS VEGAS, NV

Las Vegas Philharmonic

Cabrera conducts Mendelssohn and Schumann (March 7)

This is the fourth concert in a season-long masterworks series featuring guest soloists. Conductor Donato Cabrera – newly appointed Music Director of the Las Vegas Philharmonic – leads the orchestra in its first-ever performance of Mendelssohn's Fourth Symphony, the *Italian*. The programme opens with Schubert's Overture to *Rosamunde*. The soloist in the spotlight here is Sergey Antonov (gold medal winner of the 2007 International Tchaikovsky Competition, and even endorsed by Rostropovich), who performs Schumann's Cello Concerto.

lvphil.org

CLEVELAND, OH

The Cleveland Orchestra

Fabio Luisi / Jean-Yves Thibaudet (March 12, 13, 14)

In his previous guest appearances with the Cleveland Orchestra, maestro Fabio Luisi tantalised the audience and critics alike with his bold, unique and discernible touch with traditional repertoire. On his return this time, he presents Liszt's Second Piano Concerto, with Jean-Yves Thibaudet as soloist. The programme opens with a performance of a recent contemporary work by the Italian composer Luca Francesconi, *Cobalt, Scarlet: Two Colors of Dawn*, which promises a gorgeous sonic palette thanks to the diverse influences (from Miles Davis to Stockhausen) upon the composer. The concert closes with Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.

clevelandorchestra.com

Previews by Damian Fowler

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Vinyl revival reveals the appeal of physical

When the British recording industry body, the BPI, last published its analysis of classical music, it reported that digital sales were soaring while CDs were declining, a trend which is only likely to have continued since. But a new statistic to have emerged this month might offer a new spin on such analysis: this year, UK vinyl sales have now topped a million (see page 8). The last time they did this was 1996.

That figure is for all music, so what does this mean for classical music, where recent LP releases have included both heritage issues such as Maria Callas in *Carmen* from Warner Classics and new releases like Ingrid Fliter's recent Recording of the Month-winning Chopin recital? As my photograph hopefully just about implies, I grew up in the CD era – the discs I began collecting were 12cm silver ones, not 12 inch black ones. So while some may claim that vinyl sounds 'better', I'm perfectly happy with the purity of a CD or high-quality digital file. Furthermore, as such sound quality has become ever more portable, much of my listening is now of high-end downloads and streaming.

And yet...I can understand what lies behind the appeal of an attractively presented physical release. In so many fields – magazines just as much as music – the growth of the virtual has been matched by an additional appreciation, even celebration, of what the physical can contribute. An LP's artwork is oft cited as much missed. But physical packages don't have to be large and square: just think of the many creative back-catalogue issues we cover in our Reissues pages, from Decca's issue of *Turandot* (in impressively vivid sound)



featuring Sutherland, Caballé and Pavarotti this month, to the same label's recent fascinating survey of the Vienna Philharmonic. From Warner Classics, meanwhile, we recently had the historically important box of remastered Callas studio recordings.

For many years the bulk of reissues seemed to be about making the music available as cheaply as possible, something which may have provided a ready-made rival to budget labels. Beautiful box-sets, often with accompanying books, carry a higher price, though when considered on a price-per-disc basis, such sets can actually be incredibly good value. And people are buying them. In their thousands. One additional bonus is that such sales help labels fund new recordings. Which, in turn, become the back-catalogue of tomorrow...

It's not only reissues of course which receive the de luxe treatment: just think of Cecilia Bartoli's exploratory projects, or Teodor Currentzis's Mozart operas on Sony Classical, or Alia Vox's luxuriously illustrated tomes – fine examples of new releases which creatively think 'inside the box', as it were. But for the collector, what's most important is that physical products are, once more, capturing the imagination and becoming desirable items to own. And I suspect it's this, as much as the sound of vinyl, that goes a long way to explaining why, in an age of instant access to online music in excellent quality, people are again buying LPs. But whether it's a vinyl gatefold, a single CD or 60-disc box, a download or a streaming subscription, if people are buying music that can only be a very good thing.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Embarking again on what Beckett dubbed "the grim journey", in company with some of the finest modern

interpreters, has been exhilarating,' says **RICHARD WIGMORE**, author of this month's *Winterreise* cover story. 'Their insights have enhanced my sense of wonder at Schubert's unflinching exploration of the human condition at its bleakest.'



RICHARD S. GINELL, who has interviewed Michael Tilson Thomas for this issue, says:

'As he nears the "Grand Old Maestro" phase in his life, with its inevitable invitations to look back upon a unique career, Michael is still a youthful fountain of new and against-the-grain ideas.'



'When I first began collecting records Rachmaninov was widely seen as a pianist who dabbled in

composition,' says **DAVID GUTMAN**. 'His orchestral works rarely featured on disc and the Second Symphony was a victim of swingeing cuts. In preparing this month's Collection it's been fascinating to see how much – and how little – has changed.'

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Mike Ashman • Philip Clark • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer) • Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Duncan Druce • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows • David Fanning • Iain Fenlon • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood • Caroline Gill • Edward Greenfield • David Gutman • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Tess Knighton • Richard Lawrence • Ivan March • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol • Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Peter Quattrill • Guy Rickards • Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Julie Anne Sadie • Edward Seckerson • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn • Harriet Smith • Ken Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Thresher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse • Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is the magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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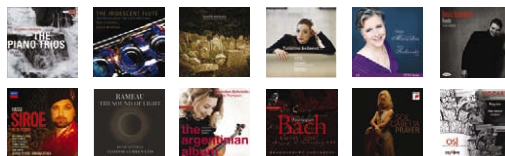
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EDITOR'S CHOICE

The 12 most highly recommended recordings of the month

FOR THE RECORD

The latest classical music news



Reviews

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Les Arts Florissants turn to Monteverdi

ORCHESTRAL

Hannu Lintu's blistering Berio; new music by Charlotte Bray, Anders Koppel and Erkki-Sven Tüür; cello concertos from London and São Paulo

CHAMBER

Captain Tobias Hume docks on Alpha records; Vivaldi from Baltic Baroque; Rimsky's *Scheherazade* scored for chamber ensemble

INSTRUMENTAL

John Butt's *Well-Tempered Clavier*; Pizarro's 'complete' Rachmaninov cycle begins; exploring Peruvian guitar manuscripts discovered in Bolivia

VOCAL

Byrd's monolith *Infelix ego* from Herreweghe; Elgar's collaborations with Laurence Binyon; French song from Stéphanie d'Oustrac

REISSUES

Big box-sets from major maestros, including 'Pierres' Boulez and Monteux

OPERA

Bellini's *Romeo and Juliet* setting from San Francisco; 'Siroe' operas by Handel and Hasse; Pavarotti on DVD in the Met's *Rigoletto*

REPLAY

Latest batch of 'Icons' boxes from Warner; six decades of recordings from the Opéra de Paris

BOOKS

Jeff Warren's Cambridge study *Music and Ethical Responsibility*; Robert Spruytenburg's conversations with the LaSalle Quartet

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

David Gutman recommends the most exceptional recordings of Rachmaninov's Symphony No 2

Features

WINTERREISE

Richard Wigmore speaks to Mark Padmore, Jonas Kaufmann, Ian Bostridge, Christoph Prégardien, Gerald Finley and others about the daunting challenge of recording Schubert's spine-chilling winter's journey

MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS

As the great American conductor turns 70, Richard S Ginell looks back at MTT's two decades with the San Francisco Symphony and his ambitious plans for the future

THE MUSICIAN & THE SCORE

The New York Philharmonic's Music Director, Alan Gilbert, talks to Andrew Mellor about the fascinating score to Nielsen's Fifth Symphony

ICONS

American soprano Leontyne Price was one of the great Verdi singers of the 20th century, David Patrick Stearns looks back at her remarkable career

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

James McCarthy looks at the breakthrough works of one of the most popular and frequently performed composers of our time: John Adams

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

Kathleen Ferrier's 1952 account of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with Bruno Walter and the Vienna Philharmonic comes under the spotlight

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE

Michael White chooses 10 recordings that best epitomise the Choral Evensong tradition

PLAYLISTS

A Liszt list; music and travel; works in E flat major

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

The best streamed or broadcast events worldwide

HIGH FIDELITY

Hi-fi highlights of 2014; introducing mu-so by Naim; Yamaha's new network CD player

LETTERS & OBITUARIES

NEW RELEASES

REVIEWS INDEX

MY MUSIC

Actor Roger Allam discusses his lifelong interest in classical music and reveals the recording he favours above all others



appian publications & recordings

NEW RELEASES

APR7305 3 CDs (3 for the price of 2)



WANDA LANDOWSKA:

The complete piano recordings

Wanda Landowska's pioneering work as a harpsichordist has overshadowed her prowess as a pianist. But as these recordings of Mozart and Haydn show, she was a trailblazer of historically informed playing long before it became fashionable.

APR6015 3 CDs (2 for the price of 1)



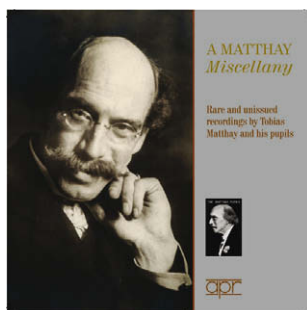
GUIOMAR NOVAES:

The complete published 78-rpm recordings

Brazilian-born Guiomar Novaes was a key figure in the heady tradition of South American female pianists. Heard in her youthful prime, she compels in the music of her compatriots and dazzles in encore pieces.

RECENT RELEASES

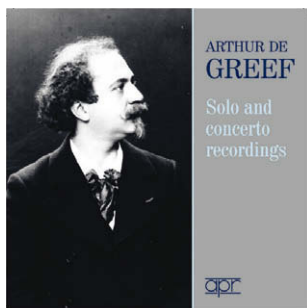
APR6014 2 CDs (2 for the price of 1)



A MATTHAY MISCELLANY: Rare and unpublished recordings by Matthay and his pupils

The final volume in APR's Matthay series includes performances by the great pedagogue himself and recently discovered recordings by Irene Scharrer and Denise Lassimannel. A treasure trove of rarities!

APR7401 4 CDs (budget price)



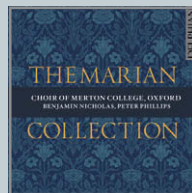
ARTHUR DE GREEF: Solo and concerto studio recordings

A friend of Grieg and a student of Liszt, Arthur de Greef was one of the first pianists to record widely. This set offers a long-overdue opportunity to re-evaluate his seminal role in the history of the piano.

'Dedicated pianophiles need not hesitate' *Gramophone, July 2014*

www.aprr recordings.co.uk

CDs available from all good retailers or download from www.hyperion-records.co.uk



DCD34144

The Marian Collection

Choir of Merton College, Oxford / Benjamin Nicholas & Peter Phillips

The fourth and final themed recording in a series that has confirmed Merton's new choral foundation as one of the UK's leading collegiate choirs. Benjamin Nicholas again draws from the landmark collection of works written in celebration of the College's 750th anniversary. Here, a new work by Judith Weir heads a set of the four Marian antiphons, all specially commissioned from female composers, with further premieres from regular Merton collaborators Gabriel Jackson and Matthew Martin. Meanwhile, Peter Phillips' expert direction of Byrd's rarely performed *Salve Regina*, a bold statement of Catholic faith from Reformation England, and of John Nesbitt's late 15th-century *Magnificat*, a piece whose neglect on disc is astonishing, completes this portrait in sound of a woman who is at once virgin and mother, human and God-bearer, suppliant and Queen of Heaven.



MORE ACCLAIMED RELEASES FROM GRAMOPHONE'S LABEL OF THE YEAR

DELPHIAN



DCD34138

Wilde plays Chopin Vol II

David Wilde piano

In his eightieth year, David's breathtaking virtuosity and towering intellect combine in interpretations informed by a long lifetime of study and performance. And his performances revel in Chopin's extremes. This is after all the composer who is reported to have said to a pupil: 'If I had your strength and could play that Polonaise as it should be played, there would be no string left unbroken by the time I had finished!' Wilde's Chopin is not for the timid. These are performances fuelled by passion, combining heartfelt tenderness with deep personal grief.

'Refusing to take anything at face value, his performances scorn a more familiar suave and evasive outlook ... an epic, gnarled and rugged genius shaking his fist at the universe with all the defiance of King Lear' — Gramophone, November 2014



DCD34149

Serenissima: Music from Renaissance Europe on Venetian viols

Rose Consort of Viols

The consort, already acclaimed for their recordings of later English repertoire, have been inspired by viol-maker Richard Jones's reconstructions of an early Venetian instrument by Francesco Linarol, and – in homage to the pan-European tendencies of the period – they trace a path from the viol's northern Italian origins to England, where it found a particularly welcome home at the turn of the 1600s.

'[The instruments] yield a delicate, veiled, subtly resonant sound, and the period tuning gives a tang to the dissonances and remote key excursions. Technically, the Rose Consort is well-nigh flawless ... restrained, refined readings' — BBC Music Magazine, Christmas 2014 edition, CHAMBER MUSIC CHOICE (****/****)

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Photo by Amberly Valentine

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



MONTEVERDI
'Madrigali, Vol 2 - Mantova'
Les Arts Florissants / Paul Agnew
Les Arts Florissants Editions Ⓢ AF003
► **FABRICE FITCH'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 22**

There's a breathtaking directness to these performances – the high degree of personality and communication is captivating, and all is presented with vivid clarity.



BERIO
Sinfonia. Calmo, etc
Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu
Ondine Ⓢ + Ⓢ ODE1227-5
Half a decade

on and in danger, says our critic, of becoming a 'classic', here Berio's *Sinfonia* feels as vivid, unexpected and contemporary as if new.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 26**



MENDELSSOHN
Symphony No 3, 'Scottish'
SCHUMANN
Piano Concerto
Maria João Pires pf
London Symphony

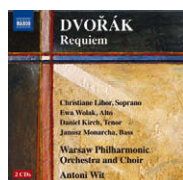
Orchestra / Sir John Eliot Gardiner
LSO Live Ⓢ ② (Ⓢ + Ⓢ) LSO0765
Gardiner brilliantly delineates orchestral textures and proves a perfect collaborative partner for Pires. ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 34**



CORELLI
'La follia'
Michala Petri rec
Mahan Esfahani hpd
OUR Recordings
Ⓢ + Ⓢ 6 220610

Collaboration of a very superior kind from two musicians whose mastery of their respective instruments is a sheer joy to hear.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 45**



DVOŘÁK Requiem
Soloists; Warsaw
Philharmonic Choir and
Orchestra / **Antoni Wit**
Naxos Ⓢ ② 8 572874/5
Antoni Wit expands

his acclaimed catalogue for Naxos with Dvořák's setting of the Requiem. There's an orchestral weight that feels just right, and some lovely solo singing.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 69**



'INVITATION AU VOYAGE'
French songs
Stéphanie d'Oustrac mez
Pascal Jourdan pf
Ambronay Ⓢ AMY042

Stéphanie d'Oustrac does both reflection and soaring drama with equal elegance throughout this beautifully conceived programme.

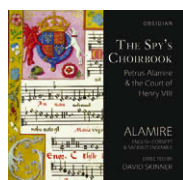
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



'SPIRIT, STRENGTH AND SORROW'
The Sixteen / Harry Christophers
Coro Ⓢ COR16127
That the pain

and power of the *Stabat mater* is just as relevant to our age as any is vividly revealed in three new settings, all with their own understanding of the prayer.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



'THE SPY'S CHOIRBOOK'
Alamire / David Skinner
Obsidian Ⓢ ② CD712
One of the British Library's finest

early-16th-century manuscripts – but what musical riches lie within too, all wonderfully performed by David Skinner and Alamire.

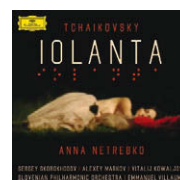
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**



HASSE Siroe, re di Persia
Soloists; Armonia Atenea
/ **George Petrou**
Decca Ⓢ ②
478 6768DHO2
There's a lively and

driving sense of drama in an ambitious project that has worked out superbly. An excellent cast is led by a really impressive performance from countertenor Cencic.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 89**



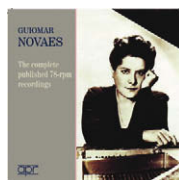
TCHAIKOVSKY Iolanta
Soloists; Slovenian
Philharmonic Orchestra /
Emmanuel Villaume
DG Ⓢ ② 479 3969GH2
An opera that can be

most moving – not least when, as here, it is given such wonderful advocacy – yet which is not as well known as it should be. Here's the perfect opportunity.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**



DVD/BLU-RAY
VERDI Messa da Requiem
Soloists; Bavarian Radio Symphony
Chorus and Orchestra / **Mariss Jansons**
ArtHaus Musik Ⓢ DVD 102 205; Ⓢ Blu-ray 108 136
'Both exciting and moving,' writes Mike Ashman of this Verdi Requiem from one of today's greatest conductors.
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



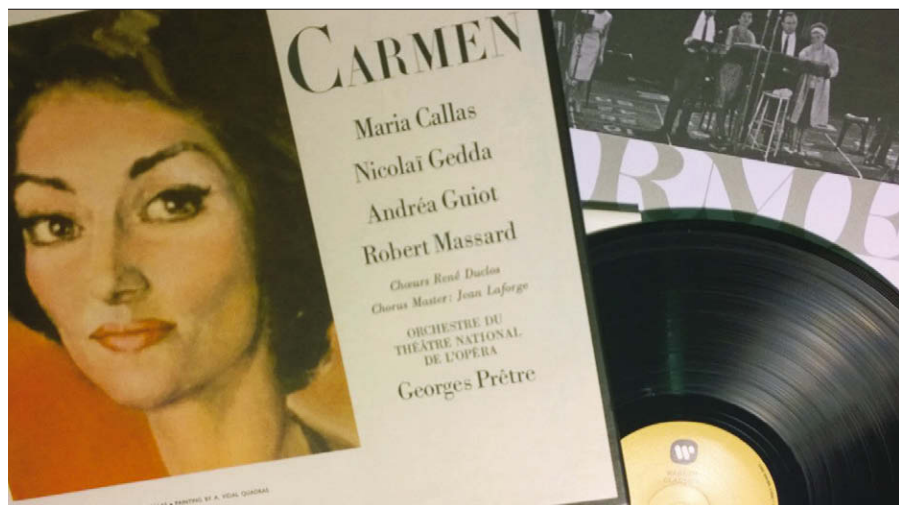
Vintage recordings but ones that convey delightful playing of warmth and personality. ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**

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FOR THE RECORD



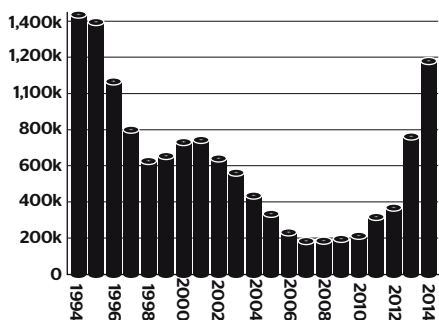
Sought-after product: Warner Classics has reissued *Carmen*, starring Maria Callas, on triple LP for £40

Bumper year for vinyl as annual LP sales in Britain exceed the one million mark

When annual LP sales last exceeded one million in Britain, John Major was the Prime Minister and the iPod wasn't even a glimmer in Steve Jobs's imagination (and he wasn't working for Apple, let alone running it).

As we go to press, the Official Charts Company estimates that total sales of LPs in Britain in 2014 will reach 1,200,000 units; in 2011 the figure was just 337,041. The BPI's Director of Communications, Gennaro Castaldo, said: 'Many of us had assumed it had become an obsolete format, but while the flame may have flickered, it never quite went out, and we are now seeing a burgeoning resurgence in demand.'

The impressive sales figures are calculated cumulatively across all music genres. Leading the vinyl renaissance are classic rock acts such as Pink Floyd, whose recent album *The Endless River* had the biggest opening week of any LP since 2000. But classical labels



British LP sales 1994-2014 (Official Charts Company)

have been quick to capitalise on the new popularity of the old format. For example, November's Recording of the Month – Ingrid Fliter's new account of Chopin's Preludes – was released on LP by Linn Records (alongside CD and all manner of digital download options), and of course Linn produces a range of high-end turntables, too.

Meanwhile, Warner Classics has produced two vinyl releases to accompany its landmark 'Callas Remastered' box-set: a triple LP of Bizet's *Carmen* (recorded in 1964) and an LP of 'highlights'. Bertrand Castellani, Vice President of Catalogue at Warner Classics, told *Gramophone*: 'The vinyl revival is not in spite of, but rather a consequence of, the growth in streaming usage. What we've seen is that, in the physical catalogue, "average" products have been suffering more and more from the competition from streaming services. At the other end, we see that projects in which we invest

New York-based musician Joshua Weilerstein takes Artistic Directorship in Lausanne

Joshua Weilerstein will become the Artistic Director of the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra for a four-year period at the start of the 2015-16 season. He will conduct a minimum of two subscription concerts, one recording and an international tour per season.

A winner of the Malko Competition for conductors in 2009 (he also carried off the Audience Prize), Weilerstein has served as an Assistant Conductor at the New York Philharmonic. He is also a noted violinist and the brother of cellist Alisa Weilerstein.

Nine first-time winners at the British Composer Awards

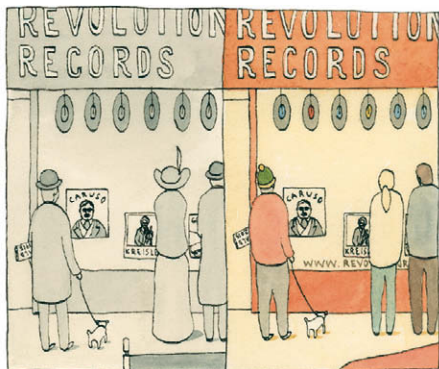
There were nine first time winners at this year's British Composer Awards, including Mark-Anthony Turnage, who won the Orchestral category for *Frieze*, commissioned to celebrate the bicentenary of the Royal Philharmonic Society. Sir Harrison Birtwistle meanwhile became the most shortlisted and awarded composer in the event's history, by winning the Vocal category for his *Songs from the Same Earth*. Kerry Andrew won two Awards: her opera *Dart's Love* won the Stage Works category and *Woodwose: A Community Chamber Opera* won in the Community or Educational Project category.

Composer Wolfgang Rihm wins the \$100,000 Grawemeyer Award

The 2015 Grawemeyer Award has been given to Wolfgang Rihm for his 15-minute orchestral work *IN-SCHRIFT 2*. Awarded annually by the University of Louisville, the Grawemeyer Award is worth \$100,000 and as such is the world's

in both editorial and sound quality, such as "Callas Remastered", prove to be more successful than ever. In future, the physical buyer will be more and more selective, since they now have numerous ways to access the music itself. Physical products will have to be outstanding, or die. Vinyl is one of the options.'

When *Gramophone* asked whether he thought the vinyl revival was here to stay, Castellani was optimistic: 'With





Wolfgang Rihm: receives \$100,000 prize

largest composition prize. Previous Grawemeyer Award-winners include John Adams (1995), Thomas Adès (2000) and Esa-Pekka Salonen (2012).

IN-SCHRIFT 2 was commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of its Philharmonie concert hall, and was premiered in October 2013. The Award's Director Marc Satterwhite said: 'The work evokes dark colours and uses mostly low instruments – no flutes, violins or violas, for example. It begins and ends in quiet and mystery, taking many interesting paths along the way.'

Renaud Capuçon chosen to head up Swiss music festival

Violinist Renaud Capuçon is due to replace the late Thierry Scherz as Artistic Director of the Sommets Musicaux Gstaad festival. His first festival in charge will take place from January 19 to February 6, 2016. Capuçon will remain Artistic Director of the Festival de Pâques at Aix-en-Provence, which he founded in 2013.

Caroline Gill spoke to Capuçon for *Gramophone* in May last year, and he revealed on that occasion his passion for building a festival: 'It's a way of creating something,' he said. 'I'm not a composer, so the way I can create is by programming.'

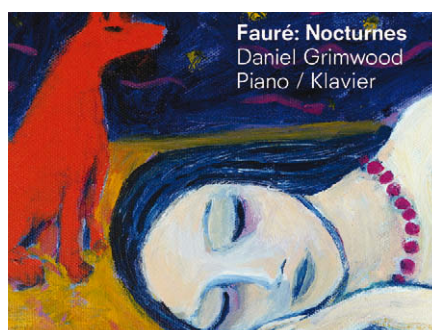
all repertoires included, 30% of US physical sales are vinyl albums. I'm just back from Hong Kong, where in some stores the vinyl racks more or less equal the CD shelves. There is something that a stream can't achieve: the pleasure of having an artistic object in front of you. In a sense, after long being linked in our minds to a specific era in recording industry – roughly 1950-80 – vinyl now represents a perfect symbol of permanence for a recording.'

Major music publisher launches its own label, Edition Peters Sounds

The music publisher Edition Peters, which can trace its history back to 1800, is launching a new record label called Edition Peters Sounds. The new record label will focus on recordings made by artists represented by Edition Peters Artist Management (EPAM), including tenor Paul Phoenix and vocal group Apollo5, and will feature works from the extensive Edition Peters publishing catalogue.

The first release on Edition Peters Sounds will be Daniel Grimwood's new recording of Fauré's Nocturnes. Grimwood's previous recordings – many of them made in collaboration with cellist Jamie Walton – have received high praise in *Gramophone*. Of particular note, though, is his solo recording of Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage* for SFZ Music, which was reviewed by Jeremy Nicholas in July 2009: 'An enthralling journey that throws new light on these poetic ideals of the Romantic era and, with hardly a pause between each item, leaves the listener, as it would any traveller on the Grand Tour, awed by the wonders of nature, the spectacular scenery and the glories of Italian culture.'

The CEO of Edition Peters Group, Nicholas Riddle, said of the new label: 'The creation of a recording label within the Edition Peters Group is an exciting, bold and positive development. It is not unusual these days for organisations to operate an "own label", and we do so in order to highlight our artists and publishing catalogue. Run from our thriving Artist Management company, EPAM, we can all look forward to listening to wonderful performances.'



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JOURNEY WITHOUT END

Following a spate of highly rated recent recordings of the cycle, Richard Wigmore tracks down some of the singers and pianists who have embarked on Schubert's bleak Winterreise



Wanderers present and past
(from left): Matthias Goerne
with pianist Eric Schneider; Ian
Bostridge; Alice Coote; and the late
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau (c1965)

‘**T**hat absolutely contemporary piece of music which will remain contemporary for ever’ was Stravinsky’s famous verdict on Beethoven’s rebarbative *Grosse Fuge*.

Move forwards two years, from 1825 to 1827, and his words could apply equally to *Winterreise*, dubbed by Schubert ‘a cycle of spine-chilling [*schauerliche*] Lieder’. What so shocked the composer’s friends when he sang through the first 12 songs, and still shocks today, is the starkness and almost minimalistic bareness of the writing, and the obsessive exploration of a mind veering between delusion, wry, mocking self-awareness and nihilistic despair. There are moments of unsentimental compassion but, except for occasional ironic effect (as in ‘Täuschung’, No 19), no trace of Biedermeier charm or prettiness. With melodic lines that are often fragmentary and/or dislocated, this is music that peers uncompromisingly into the human condition at its bleakest.

The emotional impact of *Winterreise* seems in inverse proportion to the number of notes on the page. Alfred Brendel, who formed memorable partnerships with both Fischer-Dieskau and Matthias Goerne, cites a ‘near-aphoristic concentration, so different from the many strophic songs of *Die schöne Müllerin*’. Fellow pianist Julius Drake likewise remarks how pared down and ‘under-written’ Schubert’s manuscript seems. ‘Take the second song, “Die Wetterfahne”. It’s based on a simple alternation of A minor and E major arpeggios. Yet the effect is astonishing – a chilling picture of the weathervane flailing in the wind.’ Brigitte Fassbaender, whose searing recording with Aribert Reimann transcends all questions of gender, dubs *Winterreise* ‘classical expressionism’. ‘Its shattering modernity and sheer nakedness of spiritual disturbance were unbearable in the Biedermeier era.’

In *Winterreise* the water music of Schubert’s earlier cycle to poems by Wilhelm Müller, *Die schöne Müllerin*, gives way to musical emblems of trudging and stumbling, derangement and



frozen, trance-like stillness. The protagonist is no longer an innocent, trusting youth but one whose life has been blasted by experience, a man severed from normal human bonds and fated, like Goethe's tormented old Harper and the lone, brooding figures in the darker landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich, to remain at the margins of existence. With its unflinching portrayal of modern, alienated man, and intermittent sense of existential absurdity, *Winterreise*

was, unsurprisingly, a favourite work of Samuel Beckett, who wrote admiringly of 'shivering through the grim journey'. For Benjamin Britten, whose playing on the famous Decca recording with Peter Pears is a miracle of the recreative imagination, *Winterreise* ranked with Bach's B minor Mass, its spiritual antithesis, as one of the twin peaks of Western culture. He had a point.

Schubert's own light, baritonal tenor was a rather superior *voix de compositeur* (he had, after all, been a leading treble in the Vienna court chapel choir). He originally wrote *Winterreise* in the tenor range. Before publication, though, he transposed several songs down a tone or, in the case of the desolate 'Einsamkeit' (No 12), a minor third, probably at the request of the publisher. Over the last century the cycle has been appropriated by voices ranging from lyric sopranos and mezzos to subterranean basses – Kurt Moll, Martti Talvela and, most recently, Matthew Rose, whose recording with Gary Matthewman avoids overdosing on Wotanesque gloom. The bass voice is always likely to add age and grizzled gravitas. Yet, as Rose puts it, 'Unlike some basses, we didn't find any need to take some of the songs more slowly than usual. And the depth of the bass voice is very appropriate when many of the songs swoop down to the lower reaches – "Auf dem Flusse" is a good example, as is "Der greise Kopf". It's important to generate a sense of a never-ending pulse in *Winterreise*, with little or no *ritenuto* at the end of songs: it's an endless journey of torment, one that can never let up.'

In contrast to *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Winterreise* has until quite recently been the preserve of lower, darker voices, with baritones predominating. Performances and recordings by tenors were relatively rare until the 1980s. Since then Peter Schreier, Christoph Prégardien, Ian Bostridge,



Matthew Rose and Gary Matthewman recording *Winterreise*, as drawn by Tessa Henderson

songs go a bit low for a tenor – I think especially of the last page of "Irrlicht" [where deeper baritones and basses come into their own] – but if one takes the original manuscript versions of "Wasserflut", "Rast" and "Mut", it's best seen as a tenor cycle.'

Over the decades, *Winterreise* has spawned interpretative perspectives ranging from relative detachment to passionate identification, from stoical acceptance to self-laceration, from operatic extroversion to intimate self-communion. For Bostridge it is 'a private piece, an album to be sung to oneself or one's friends, a piece of musical poetry'. He also stresses the mockery and pitch-black humour that flit in and out of *Winterreise*, 'sardonic light in the darkness. I'm told that my performance has become more "expressionistic", but I've always felt it that way and have maybe found new ways of creating that feeling. *Winterreise* has to be new and shocking each time – it's how Schubert's friends first experienced it – and it's no good presenting something tame and well sung.'

Mark Padmore, too, links the cycle with the existential absurdity of Samuel Beckett. 'There's something very Beckettian about its barrenness, its alienated, anti-bourgeois vision, and its moments of black humour. I still find it very unsentimental: unlike *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Winterreise*

doesn't ask the audience to sympathise with the wanderer. It's an exploration of the outsider, and while it shouldn't provoke tears, it can break your heart.'

Jonas Kaufmann, whose recording with Helmut Deutsch won last year's Gramophone Solo Vocal Award, sees the cycle rather differently. 'For me, the crucial question is: is Schubert's wanderer merely resigned, and in the end picks himself up, or is he flirting with thoughts of suicide? Helmut Deutsch believes that amid the sorrow and anger there are flashes of hope, as in "Mut". I disagree. In



Mark Padmore and Paul Lewis, whose recording of *Winterreise* was issued in 2009

“Letzte Hoffnung” the wanderer’s last hope dies, as the title suggests. I see the central theme of *Winterreise* as longing for death. Brief moments of ironic mockery are quickly overwhelmed with pathos and a sense of hopelessness.’

Julius Drake, fresh from performing and recording the cycle with mezzo Alice Coote and baritone Gerald Finley, is quick to stress that ‘There’s no definitive way of doing any song in *Winterreise*. Alice Coote is very dramatic and passionate, while Gerry is much more inward. The crucial thing is that a performance comes from the heart, sung with conviction and integrity.’ Like Fassbaender before her, Coote makes gender seem irrelevant. ‘It’s a psychological and spiritual, not a sexual, journey, one that reduces human experience to total solitude. *Winterreise* would be a lesser piece if it were only available to men. The wanderer is a very disturbed, vulnerable, loving human being. He’s fractured, broken-spirited but at no point mad.’

For Finley, whose nobly sung performance narrowly lost out to Kaufmann in the Awards, a prime challenge in *Winterreise* is to avoid any hint of self-pity. ‘Initially, each circumstance provokes the poet-wanderer to reflect on the pain of loss, of frustration, and of shattered expectations. Then it becomes about determined survival. He has the strength to muse on that

‘Interpretations range from stoical acceptance to self-laceration, from operatic extroversion to intimate self-communion’

survival throughout the whole cycle until the end. The pacing of the footsteps in the initial “Gute Nacht”, and then in later songs (“Rast”, “Der Wegweiser”, “Das Wirtshaus”), is vital to reflect the wanderer’s diminishing energy.’

The wanderer’s survival is also the keynote for the tenor Christoph Prégardien, who recorded and often performed the cycle with Andreas Staier, playing a copy of an 1820s Graf fortepiano – the kind of instrument Schubert would have known. ‘The whole cycle takes place over a few days, and he’s in the first moments of the experience of loss. Getting over the loss of love takes months, years. *Winterreise* is totally different from *Die schöne Müllerin*, where the young miller really goes mad towards the end. The wanderer is thrown left and right by his emotions; but these include not only sadness and despair, but also anger and defiance. He will live on.’ Adds Staier: ‘*Winterreise* is a work of extremes. The fortepiano cannot be as loud as a modern Steinway, of course. But with its various pedals it has a greater variety of sonorities, and greater intimacy – it’s a specifically Romantic instrument, and Schubert understood precisely how to play with its colours. If you use the moderator pedal in “Der Lindenbaum”, the whispering leaves become more mysterious. And it gives the major-key final verse of “Gute Nacht” and “Das Wirtshaus” a remote, other-worldly quality.’

The minor-major symbolism of ‘Gute Nacht’, with the minor mode evoking the wanderer’s plight, the major past happiness, real or imaginary, will become a crucial structural factor in *Winterreise*. It recurs, for instance, in the fifth song, ‘Der Lindenbaum’ – the only one to please Schubert’s friends when he sang the first 12 songs ‘in a voice wrought with emotion’ – and in No 11, ‘Frühlingstraum’. Here the dream of spring, evoked in a quasi-folksong of Mozartian grace and innocence, is shattered by the screeching, discordant cries of the cock and ravens as the disoriented wanderer awakes. With excruciating

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poignancy, the final section oscillates between major and minor as dream and illusion mingle with bleak self-awareness. For Mark Padmore this is 'the gloomiest point of the whole cycle. The intense bleakness at the end, culminating in a chilling A minor chord, is especially hard to bear, for both singer and audience.'

After sounding new depths of loneliness and physical weariness in 'Einsamkeit', Schubert kick-starts the second half of *Winterreise* with the galloping rhythms and braying posthorn calls of 'Die Post'. This is the wanderer's last, fleeting, contact with the world of cheerful, robust normality, and, significantly, the last song in which his lost love is directly mentioned.

From now on the cycle assumes an increasingly philosophical dimension. In what pianist Roger Vignoles terms 'a coming-to-terms with the long, dark night of the soul, in an early-19th-century equivalent of in-depth psychotherapy', the wanderer burrows ever deeper into his own psyche in his quest for self-knowledge, and the meaning – or absurdity – of existence. The spectre of instability, or

madness, first glimpsed in the lure of the will-o'-the-wisp in 'Irrlicht', No 9, flickers through the remainder of the cycle. Vignoles points out that whereas in the first half of *Winterreise* songs in the minor key far outnumber those in the major, in the second half, as the process of physical and psychological dislocation intensifies, the balance shifts. 'Minor still signifies the wanderer's state at any given moment. But the major key in the later songs is no longer memory, but illusion or a deluded search for the unreachable.'

The last stage of the inner and outer journey begins with two pivotal songs, 'Der Wegweiser' and 'Das Wirtshaus'. In 'Der Wegweiser' the singer's chant-like monotone against a slow, descending chromatic bass (time-honoured musical symbol of mourning and death) lends a terrifying power to the final 'Einen Weiser seh ich stehen' – 'I see a signpost standing immovable before me'. But the prospect of death is denied the wanderer in 'Das Wirtshaus', a song at once majestic, heartbreaking and biting irony. Here the wanderer finds himself in a cemetery and asks, in vain, for a room at the 'inn'. 'The wanderer is searching for peace and rest, but is driven on,' says Gerald Finley. 'And the following song, "Mut", can either be delirious or sung with gasps of exhaustion.'

Alfred Brendel insists that 'Das Wirtshaus' 'should be performed very slowly indeed – the marking *Sehr langsam* is a rarity in Schubert. Played as a kind of *largo*, it conveys the quiet solemnity of the graveyard. For me, the song is one of the finest in *Winterreise*.' Julius Drake notes that 'Schubert writes a hymn here because the wanderer is ready to lie down and give up. Yet

he has to go on. After an hour, it's extremely hard for singer and pianist to do "Das Wirtshaus" justice. The chords must be warm and sonorous, hymn-like, though it's not just a hymn. And it would be much easier if it were marked *mezzo-piano* rather than *pianissimo*, which in Schubert always means a special quality of inwardness.'

After 'Mut', where the wanderer hurls manic defiance at God and fate (Jonas Kaufmann sees the denial of God as an affirmation that 'the suicidal wanderer will take his life, and the end of his life, into his own hands'), the penultimate 'Die Nebensonnen' is music beyond suffering and madness: a transfigured, incantatory sarabande whose melody circles,

trance-like, around one note. 'Here the wanderer implies he wants to die,' says Roger Vignoles. 'That's surely the significance of the last of the three suns. The song is another example of Schubert's genius for painting vivid canvases in sound. We can imagine Wagner tubas here – an astronomical vision summed up in music 30 years before Wagner!'

Broken, with nothing more to lose, the wanderer finally makes

contact with another human being: the ancient hurdy-gurdy man, a forlorn, tottering figure forever condemned to grind out repeated snatches of wheezing melody, almost non-melody. (Hurdy-gurdy men were a commonplace in Schubert's Vienna.) For Brigitte Fassbaender, the wanderer is by now 'a clairvoyant, no longer of this world. The song looks into the void. Emotion is exhausted, yet there is no end. I have never known, or want to know, what or who the hurdy-gurdy man is.' Andreas Staier agrees: 'There's a virtual absence of meaning in the poem, matched by a virtual absence of music! This creates a double insecurity – we don't know what's going on any more here.'

Christoph Prégardien takes a more specific view: 'In the "Leiermann" the wanderer finds someone similar to him, a companion to share his life. Their meeting implies some kind of new start.' Roger Vignoles, too, sees the encounter with the 'wunderlicher Alter' as 'a potential opening of a door, not a closing. Perhaps the Leiermann represents a different kind of enlightenment. In Schubert's original keys, the A major of "Nebensonnen" is followed by B minor for "Leiermann". We're surprised at this upward shift. For me this makes the cycle open-ended.' Conversely, for Jonas Kaufmann the hurdy-gurdy man is a figment of the wanderer's imagination, like the poet's double in the terrifying Heine song 'Der Doppelgänger'. 'In "Der Leiermann" it is as if a madman is talking with the ghost of a dead man – perhaps the ghost of the wanderer himself.'

Ian Bostridge sees a 'Beckettian sense of eternal recurrence' in this final song, a notion shared by Mark Padmore. 'The Leiermann is definitely not death. There's possible



Two German tenor interpreters: Christoph Prégardien and Jonas Kaufmann

'The wanderer burrows ever deeper into his own psyche in his quest for self-knowledge, and the meaning – or absurdity – of existence'

rehabilitation here. The Leiermann is a beggar, the ultimate outsider, a Beckettian tramp. He and the wanderer could become a double act, like Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*.'

The 80-odd versions (and counting) in the catalogue confirm Gerald Finley's contention that this final song 'can go in any direction the performers choose. Occasionally I see death in the Leiermann but the surge of energy after the final vocal phrase gives me a sense of life, somehow vivid, sometimes brutal then finding peace, or at least rest, from exhaustion. Occasionally I find consolation, even comfort and resolution in that final minor chord. Sometimes I imagine the poet has gone mad and this is just a part of a repetitive fragment that we glimpse. It is the most elusive song in the repertoire.'

After the wanderer's address to the old man and the outcry on the final 'drehn', the strange pair seem to recede into the frozen landscape. Whether one sees the hurdy-gurdy man as a symbol of death (the traditional view), as a terrifying vision of the wanderer's own future existence (Schubert's friend Eduard von Bauernfeld recalled that the composer saw him as a portent of what he might become as his illness took its toll), or as a first, tenuous step towards rehabilitation, this shockingly bare, frozen music remains an enigmatic epitaph to this cycle of 'spine-chilling songs', an existential journey without end whose emotional force is as naked today as it was in 1827. No wonder that Schubert, conscious that he had achieved something extraordinary even by his standards, countered his friends' bewilderment quite simply: 'I like these songs better than any others, and you will come to like them as well.' **G**

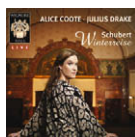
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Christoph Prégardien, Andreas Staier
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With his plangent, slightly baritone tenor, Prégardien lives the cycle intensely, in tandem with the ever-imaginative Staier. Few performances have such a natural feel for Schubertian *rubato*, while the sharp contrasts of timbre between the fortepiano's registers emphasise the desultory, fragmented nature of so much of the keyboard-writing.



Alice Coote, Julius Drake
Wigmore Hall Live (M)
WHLIVE0057 (6/13)

Like her one-time teacher Brigitte Fassbaender, Alice Coote gives a lacerating, no-holds-barred performance. Schubert's wanderer here becomes dislocated Everywoman as Coote and Julius Drake probe the extremes of anguish, rage and numb desolation.



Mark Padmore, Paul Lewis
Harmonia Mundi (P)
HMU90 7484 (11/09)

There's pain, pathos, musing tenderness aplenty in this intensely felt, self-confiding performance, with tenor and pianist in symbiotic partnership. The final impression is one of stoical endurance, an overwhelming burden endured against appalling odds.



Gerald Finley, Julius Drake
Hyperion (P)
CDA68034 (4/14)

Finley and Drake give a profoundly elegiac, inward reading, stressing pathos and ruefulness over anguish and sardonic mockery – the virtual antithesis of Alice Coote's performance. The final songs suggest not so much a drift into and beyond madness as a gradual withdrawal into bleak reverie.

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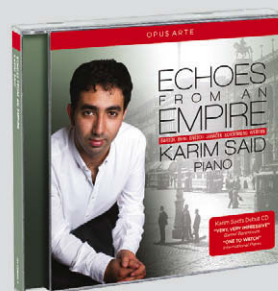
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A portrait of Michael Tilson Thomas, a man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit and white shirt. He is leaning forward with his hands clasped, looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. In the bottom left corner, there is a wooden music stand with an open book of musical notation.

Michael Tilson Thomas

He's headed up the San Francisco Symphony for almost 20 years and soon turns 70. Yet Michael Tilson Thomas has lost none of the adventurous spirit he first showed as a 'brash, self-possessed kid fresh out of USC', says longtime MTT interviewer Richard S Ginell

AN FRANCISCO:

It hardly seems possible, but Michael Tilson Thomas – the wunderkind who burst out of Los Angeles's sun-baked San Fernando Valley to world fame in his mid-20s – turns 70 years old on December 21. Or should we say 70 years young, for the still-trim-looking MTT on the threshold of his eighth decade continues to be a compulsively innovative conductor, pianist, thinker and provocateur.

'Adventurous programming is something I'm very much committed to,' Tilson Thomas said backstage at Davies Symphony Hall where he had just led his San Francisco Symphony in a typically inventive programme. He had quickly changed into a loose-fitting blue jacket similar to the one he wore in rehearsal the previous day – blue is his favourite colour, the SFS season brochure says helpfully – and his conversation still had that darting quality that could shoot in all directions, though more focused than I remember from our marathon talks in LA three decades before. As then, it was one-on-one – no entourage, no watchful handlers.

'I've always had this mixture,' he added, admitting that it's becoming more difficult to do. 'This is coming from [LA's]

Monday Evening Concerts and the Ojai Festival – the sensibility that I grew up with. There would be a programme that would have Pérotin and Boulez in the same concert. I like to make these juxtapositions. It's important that new audiences hear these. Last night, somebody came up to me and said, "Oh, this piece by Ives is so fascinating, I've never actually heard a piece of his before." There's always someone there for whom it's a new experience.'

In the past with the SFS, Tilson Thomas has curated two 'American Mavericks' festivals which celebrated composers who had created a new American sound for the 20th century. The first half of the concert he had conducted before our conversation for this article was a pairing of two of his favourite 'mavericks' – Lukas Foss's *a cappella* choral rarity '*...then the rocks on the mountain began to shout*' – Charles Ives, followed by Ives's *Three Places in New England* which Tilson Thomas has championed since the start of his career (it was on his first recording as a conductor back in 1970). The second half consisted of Johann Strauss II's *Blue Danube*, Ligeti's

Lux Aeterna (another *a cappella* work), and Richard Strauss's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Now what could the latter three pieces have in common? They're all featured in *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a film by another American maverick, Stanley Kubrick.

As part of its season, the SFS holds open rehearsals before certain concerts, so the public gets to see the musicians in street clothes – a sea of brightly coloured T-shirts. Recently, Tilson Thomas spent nearly half of one rehearsal on the difficult, tangled Ives piece alone, tending to details ('Make that E flat stronger and sadder,' he told a flautist), and telling the audience of mostly senior citizens and a gaggle of schoolchildren in the balcony how Ives's piece works ('Sometimes in cooperation, sometimes in collision!').

Tilson Thomas also doesn't hesitate to address the audiences of his regular concerts, providing useful, often entertaining information when he is about to perform an unfamiliar or difficult piece. He drew upon his rich set of friendships with great American

musicians as well as his talent for mimicry as he hilariously imitated Foss's effusive German-accented English. Observing his conducting, one didn't see the flamboyant choreography of his years as the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Principal Guest Conductor in the early 1980s – he tends to

keep his feet planted more solidly on the podium – but there are still the big sweeping motions of old.

Now in his 20th season with the SFS (he has an 'evergreen' contract, meaning that he can stay as long as he wants), Tilson Thomas's relationship with the orchestra goes way back to his debut in 1974 as a guest conductor. In those days, the SFS was a markedly different organisation. With Davies Hall still six years off in the future, the SFS shared the War Memorial Opera House with San Francisco Opera, many members also playing in the opera's orchestra.

'It was a Mozart piano concerto played by John Browning, followed by Mahler Nine,' Tilson Thomas said, vividly recalling that first concert. 'I had done the piece before maybe three or four times; it was one of the first Mahler symphonies that I did. And I remember that the acoustic of the opera stage was a bit on the woolly side. But there was a tremendous zeal on the part of the orchestra to put the music across, over the footlights literally. I was very impressed by that; I enjoyed the experience very much. Then over the next many years as a

I'm very committed to adventurous programming. There's always someone in the audience for whom a piece is a new experience'



Enduring partnership: Tilson Thomas first conducted the SFS in 1974 and discovered 'a tremendous zeal on the part of the orchestra to put the music across'

guest conductor, I always enjoyed the fact that the orchestra seemed to be willing to play outside the lines, leading to a situation where ultimately one could *listen* outside the lines.'

When Tilson Thomas became Music Director in 1995, he said he 'was aware the orchestra had two histories. It had the history of the very focused work that it had done with Herbert Blomstedt on the standard repertoire. But it also still had the sense of adventurousness in new music from Edo de Waart, John Adams, Charles Wuorinen and the "New and Unusual Music" series. So that was a strong place to begin what I was imagining to do.'

Tilson Thomas immediately went to work refashioning the orchestra's profile in his first year on the job, programming festivals of American music that eventually morphed into those wildly imaginative 'American Mavericks' festivals of 2000 and 2012. A contract with BMG resulted in a stream of discs that leaned toward 20th-century Americans and Russians in contrast to Blomstedt's Central European/Scandinavian emphasis for Decca. However, the big move came after the BMG contract came to an end; the SFS gave up on the major labels and formed SFS Media, which to date has sold nearly 275,000 CDs.

'I loved to have the experience of being able to explore repertoire, and with the major labels it became more difficult to do that,' Tilson Thomas said. 'You could spend a great deal of time discussing a particular project, but actually to get it launched seemed to be more difficult for the labels to accomplish...So it made sense for San Francisco to develop its own label.'

'Mahler's symphonies are scary. But when we come back to them, we can feel where we left off and where we're going next'

The SFS Mahler Project – which took in all of Mahler's completed symphonies and almost all of the orchestral songs over a period from 2001 to 2009 – was an audacious way to launch a new label. The packaging was luxurious, the sound quality equally so with everything issued in hybrid SACD format from the start and recently, through Linn Records, in lossless downloads. The whole enterprise culminated in a magnificent anachronism in the best sense of the word – the entire Mahler Project on 22 LPs and a bonus EP, housed with a hardback book in an imposing box weighing over nine-and-a-half kilos.

Furthermore, Mahler remains a touchstone for the SFS, since Tilson Thomas has continued programming anywhere from one to three Mahler symphonies per season since finishing the project. 'Guilty, yes!' he exclaims. 'We all know that when we come back to these pieces, we can feel immediately where we left off and where we're going next. They're kind of scary, these symphonies. But at the first rehearsal, people understand the territory of this music very well, so we just begin.'

A devil's advocate wondered whether all of this effort to put out a state-of-the-sonic-art product was worth the trouble, given the fact that lots of people, if not an outright majority, listen to music only via compressed MP3s or streaming. One way Tilson Thomas deals with that is by listening to his recordings during the editing process on mediocre equipment to see whether the performances communicate well under those conditions. He also recognises the dominance of YouTube in

many listeners' lives, personally choosing the best-sounding method of compression for his YouTube Symphony project at the Sydney Opera House.

One also wondered if the need for repertoire to be recorded drove the programming at Davies Hall. 'It's mostly the other way around,' Tilson Thomas said. 'Sometimes there can be a little adjustment. All orchestras are now catching up to where pop groups have been for decades, which is when you go on tour, you have some kind of product that is represented in the repertoire of the tour. We are doing this a little bit more now because we nearly always have a Mahler symphony with which we tour, so we have that repertoire which is recorded. Now, on the next tour we are doing to Europe, we will also have a new Tchaikovsky recording – the Fifth Symphony – which will be represented in the repertoire.'

That thought triggered an old memory of the brash, self-possessed kid not long out of USC. 'About 10,000 years ago, I made a recording with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for Deutsche Grammophon of the Tchaikovsky First Symphony. It turned out to be a very lovely record; it's still lovely. Based on the success of that record, I was asked by a very exalted A&R person inside of Deutsche Grammophon – I wasn't so much asked, I was told – that the next year, I would be recording the Tchaikovsky Fifth Symphony. And I said, "No! I can't do that." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Tchaikovsky wrote his First Symphony when he was 26 years old. I am now 26 years old, I think I understand very well what this is about. But Tchaikovsky wrote the Fifth Symphony when he was 48, and he obviously experienced an entirely different realm of what life brings to you. I'm not at that stage of my life. I think I understand some of what he is talking about, but there's no way between now and next year that I could ever study enough or I could live enough to do believably a performance of that piece. So all I would be able to do is do somewhat like what people already did or, maybe if I were feeling revolutionary, I could do the opposite of what they did. But either way, that would be a very artificial decision. So I can't do that." This executive looked at me like I was certifiable!'

Now, Tilson Thomas feels very good about his upcoming Tchaikovsky Fifth 'because it has been possible for me in my life to not only perform this piece a lot, but to harken back to the sense of elegance that Piatigorsky, Heifetz and Rubinstein imparted to me about this kind of music. I jokingly say that I might be the last Czarist-trained musician to be doing this music! I probably didn't have to wait from when I was 26 until when I was 70 to do it, but nonetheless, this feels very natural.'

SFS Media has mostly taken two parallel directions since the Mahler Project – one branch devoted to the 'American Maverick' composers, the other to a German maverick named Beethoven. Out in summer 2015 will be a pairing of John Adams's *Absolute Jest* and *Grand Pianola Music* – both of which take off from Beethoven and tie together SFS Media's parallel directions – and 2015 will also see the release of Mason Bates's *Alternative Energy*, *The B-Sides* and *Liquid Interface* on one disc. Brahms's First Symphony and Beethoven's Mass in C are in the can, and also on ice is Henry Brant's spatial piece *Ice Field*, which software developers are already interested in using as a demo in order to develop ways of coaxing multi-channel sound out of two speakers.

Then there are Tilson Thomas's DVD/Blu-ray projects, most notably the eight-volume *Keeping Score* series whose on-location documentaries and innovative camera techniques push the boundaries of music education once defined by Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts. Though

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MICHAEL TILSON THOMAS • MUSIC DIRECTOR





Tireless innovator: MTT constantly seeks to present music in new and unique ways

Keeping Score has run its course, Tilson Thomas hints that there may be a 'son of *Keeping Score*' video project that moves toward a new format yet to be determined.

Tilson Thomas is especially enthused about SFS Media's newest outside-the-box release, 'Masterpieces in Miniature', a programme of 12 short, encore-length pieces, sumptuously played, which is both perfect for the 21st-century iTunes format and a throwback to the way classical music was recorded and packaged 70 years ago on 78rpm discs.

'I wanted to do this for the 20th anniversary of my relationship with this orchestra rather than record *Gurrelieder* or something like that,' Tilson Thomas said. 'I wanted to go back to these very sensitive pieces that I played accompaniment for in the Heifetz masterclasses, or that Rubinstein used to play. I wanted to go back to this repertoire of the encore piece, the salon piece, the 'Album Leaf' kind of pieces, which actually are very, very difficult, even for soloists, to find exactly the right combination of *rubato* and sensitivity. It's almost a lost art.'

'The album has two very brilliant pieces of music at the beginning and at the end. But then in between, there is a lot of this more wistful music. I'm very fond of wistful music because wistfulness is an emotion that has nearly vanished from the scene. Classical music has become a kind of preserve for endangered emotions – wistfulness, longing, all these things that are definitely almost gone in the instant-gratification, channel-changing, thrill-seeking, game-playing culture in which we exist. These pieces are all kind of part of this vanished world, and to have these pieces done by an orchestra is an even more special experience. This album is a tremendous testimony to the kind of very flexible, sensitive issues of sound and nuance that we have come to be comfortable about in performing together.'

Tilson Thomas's 20th anniversary season with the San Francisco Symphony is full of enterprising projects – 'some Maverick stuff, some Russian stuff, some American stuff, three mammoth Beethoven projects,' he said. The latter consist of concert performances of *Fidelio*, a re-creation of the sprawling 1808 concert that delivered the Fifth and Sixth Symphonies and other works into the world, and a 'staged' *Missa solemnis* (he called it an 'installation') that he will

introduce with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in January before it comes to San Francisco in June. 'The piece is so great, it mystifies the audience because it presents such an enormous *corpus*,' he said. 'It's so big, it kind of strangles itself on its massiveness. People get lost, they can no longer perceive how many different agendas Beethoven is pursuing in that piece.'

'If you used ensembles in different parts of the hall, if you used different-sized groups, if you used lighting in situations and locations, the music could be presented in such a way that it would be easier for the audience to follow the interesting plan that Beethoven is pursuing. I've thought about this for a very long time and it is a very risky thing to do, but that's what I do.'

In March 2015, there will be an American tour with the London Symphony Orchestra, of which Tilson Thomas remains Principal Guest Conductor (he was the orchestra's Principal Conductor from 1988 to 1995). There are also several concerts with the New World Symphony, his youth orchestra in Miami which serves as what he calls a 'kind of research-and-development arm of classical music' for multi-media projects that eventually make their way to San Francisco and elsewhere.

When he himself was 26, the singer Paul Simon wrote a resonating line in his song 'Old Friends': 'How terribly strange to be 70.' I put the question to Tilson Thomas: does *he* find it terribly strange to be 70?

'Nope, I don't find it strange,' he answered. 'I'm feeling kind of liberated by the whole experience. It amuses me to reflect that for a great deal of my life – certainly my first, most impressionable experiences in the classical music world – I was the youngest person on stage. Now, very often, I'm the oldest person on stage, especially in Europe.'

'But funnily enough, I still feel like the same person. There are members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic who know me still from way, way back who have said about me, "Well, you know, Michael is exactly the same as he was. It's just that he's gotten a lot better at knowing how to achieve the results he's after." I very much appreciate that.'

MTT's 'Masterpieces in Miniature' will be reviewed in a future issue

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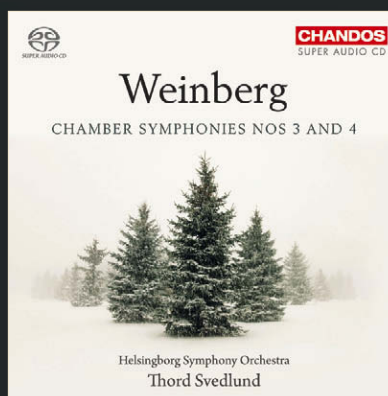


Imogen Cooper

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Recording of the Month

Fabrice Fitch welcomes a French consort's first foray into the madrigals of Monteverdi



Monteverdi

'Madrigali, Vol 2 - Mantova'

Madrigals: Book 4 – Sfogava con le stelle; Si ch'io vorrei morire; Voi pur da me partite; Anima dolorosa; Piagn' e sospira, e quand' i caldi raggi. Book 5 – Cruda Amarilli; O Mirtillo, Mirtill' anima mia; Era l'anima mia; T'amo mia vita, la mia cara vita; E così a poco a poco; Questi vaghi concenti. Book 6 – Lamento d'Arianna; Zefiro torna; Sestina

Les Arts Florissants / Paul Agnew

Les Arts Florissants Editions © AF003
(74' • DDD • T/t)

Monteverdi's madrigals have been served so well and so richly that ensembles must be pretty sure of their ground before tackling them. William Christie's Monteverdi never struck me as his strongest suit; but here Les Arts Florissants are led by their Assistant Director, Paul Agnew (who also sings), and the results seem to me to rival Concerto Italiano or La Venexiana at their best, though they take a rather different approach.

Agnew's selection is impeccably judged, taking in excerpts from the middle third of Monteverdi's madrigal output, Books 4 to 6 (issued in 1603, 1605 and 1614 respectively), covering what Agnew loosely terms his 'Mantuan' period and culminating in the *Lamento d'Arianna*, the *Sestina* and the sublime 'Zefiro torna'. As Agnew admits, Book 6 is on such a sustained level that choosing



'Les Arts Florissants' lighter timbre makes for an elfin capacity to render changes of mood that can be properly breathtaking'

from it is a challenge in itself, but the three pieces he selects are among the most ambitious of Monteverdi's output until that date and thus a fitting place to end. There is a coda, however, which is also logical in its own way: this is 'Questi vaghi concenti' from Book 5, whose obbligato violins announce the direction in which Monteverdi was to take the form subsequently. (The instrumental consort here surpasses those of the Italians mentioned above and the singers' thoughtful tone is at least as convincing.) Agnew explains his choices in a particularly illuminating, thoughtful

text: in Book 6 in particular, I'd say they're spot-on.

Les Arts Florissants have not so rich a sound as their Italian counterparts but the lighter timbre makes for a texture of rare transparency, an elfin capacity to render changes of mood that can be properly breathtaking: 'Cruda Amarilli' from Book 5 illustrates this nicely and is practically flawless from beginning to end. The consonantal crunch at the beginning may be an obvious trick but it's so perfectly executed that one wonders how Rinaldo Alessandrini could have resisted it; cannot the obvious solution be the best, particularly when it launches such sharp sallies straight afterwards? Myrtillo's invective against Amarilli has the force of a flung gauntlet ('più sorda e più fera e più fugace') but is also a fine example of *sprezzatura*, the casual virtuoso elegance that was so prized at the time. Such a moment captures not just the essence of a piece but an entire aesthetic.

It is with Book 5 that the recording really comes alive (though there's much to admire in Book 4 – try 'Sfogava con le stelle' or especially 'Si ch'io vorrei morire'), and the ensemble's compactness and lucidity pay equal dividends in Book 6. Much as I value Alessandrini's Monteverdi (and his Book 6 in particular), his mannerist approach – while appropriate on a number of counts – can make the formal trajectory of even the



Les Arts Florissants perform Monteverdi's Sixth Book of Madrigals in concert at the Cité de la Musique, Paris

shorter pieces of Book 4 harder to grasp at first hearing. This is done deliberately and for very perfectly valid reasons but it is good to have a more directly 'legible' account that matches it technically. In the *Lamento d'Arianna* honours are even, insofar as Alessandrini keeps a firm hold of the narrative thread, which however is loosened to good purpose at the end. Agnew's ensemble places greater emphasis on the soprano, so that one can imagine the piece more readily in the context of the lost opera whence it came: there is more bite in the climactic sections. And so to the *Sestina*, where *Concerto Italiano*'s

darker hues better suit the subject-matter but Agnew's decision to dispense with continuo imparts a concentrated sparseness that is just as distinctive. This is some of the saddest music that Monteverdi wrote – not Arianna's theatrical desolation but its interiorised mirror image. In this sense the two works, both of roughly equal length, complement each other perfectly (compare for example the cries of 'Ahi me' just before my chosen extract in stanza 5 to the opening of the *Lamento*). The recorded acoustic gives the ensemble little to fall back on: this is consort-singing without a safety net, risk-taking that pays dividends.

I cannot conclude without mentioning 'Zefiro torna', whose closing section is one of the most erotically charged of all the madrigal literature. Les Arts Florissants are every bit as involving as *Concerto Italiano*: again they are lighter on their feet, aided by the intricate passagework of an effervescent continuo section. That astonishing conclusion is all the more effective.

The lavish accompanying materials are beautifully presented (they include very evocative photographs of the concerts associated with this recording), but are not without errors: the composer's birthdate is given incorrectly in the first line of the introductory text and the painting reproduced on page 28 is no longer thought to represent him. A separate booklet contains a short story by René de Ceccatty, through whose narrative Monteverdi's music runs like a thread (albeit at times a barely visible one). Finally, if you're wondering why this recording focuses only on the 'middle period' madrigals, it's because two further ones will eventually complete the chronological sequence on either side: I look forward to them. And if you don't know a note of Monteverdi's madrigals, this single volume should be enough to persuade you that you ought to have done, long ago. **G**

Listening points Your guide to the disc's memorable moments

Track 2: 'Sì ch'io vorrei morire', 2'00" to the end

Here Monteverdi tries his hand at *contrapposto*, a virtuoso juxtaposition of opposing lines: descending sopranos followed by an ascent in all the voices, then a reprise of the passionate opening outburst.

Track 6: 'Cruda Amarilli', 1'00" to 1'42"

The ensemble turns on a dime, from sensual chords at 'Amarilli' to biting dissonances at 'più fera' and a final onrush at 'più fugace': consort-singing of a high order.

Track 15: 'Zefiro torna', 2'34" to the end

One of my favourite passages in all of Monteverdi's music, a sequence that builds from the middle of the texture to the very top, raising the stakes each time. It must be thrilling to sing this – and sing *like* this.

Track 20: *Sestina*, 1'15" to the end of stanza 5

Monteverdi's insidious build-up to the final phrase, while not as theatrical as with *Concerto Italiano*, is no less effective here. The pause before that last 'qui' is the final turn of the knife.

Orchestral



David Fanning on the latest in Bridge's Poul Ruders series:

'Fifty minutes of Ruders is to my mind worth 100 of most of his peers, and handsomely repays repeated listening' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



Rob Cowan on The Rite of Spring recorded in Basle – twice:

'If you didn't know what music you were listening to you might not even recognise it'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 39**

JS Bach

Six Brandenburg Concertos, BWV1046-1051

Florilegium

Channel Classics ② ③ CCSSA35914

(94' • DDD/DSD)



Florilegium put concert performances of the *Brandenburg Concertos* at the heart

of their 20th-anniversary celebrations in 2011 and this recording is a natural end result. It bears the hallmarks of coming into being that way, principally in interpretations that are well played-in and sure of their interpretative selves. These are not the kind of quirky, deliberately shocking or simply whirlwind performances you sometimes get from groups eager to make a mark (though those certainly have their place), but rather the type that lets grown-up musicianship and instrumental expertise help Bach himself do most of the talking.

Ashley Solomon's decision to present the concertos in reverse order, so that the number of players increases with each work, is unlikely to mean much to listeners picking a favourite concerto or two to enjoy. Yet I can't help liking the fact that No 6 comes first, especially as it makes such an impact with its deliciously 'stringy' sound (the violas tickling us with their turn figures in the first movement) and a finale which highlights the contrast between steady but irresistible ritornellos and scampering solos. No 5 is similarly controlled, especially in Terence Charlston's thoughtfully shaped harpsichord cadenza, a refreshing change from the dizzy dash it has so often become. There is an engaging lift, too, in the gigue-style finale.

Brandenburg No 4 is less successful; despite a pleasing balance and fluid virtuosity from violinist Bojan Čičić it is rather polite, with a lack of cumulative excitement in the finale. No 3 makes amends, however, again relishing the sheer

stringiness of the piece and offering ear-catching dynamic contrasts in the first movement and a lightly touched but engaging finale.

The first movement of No 2 is not quite as sparkling as it might be but the second movement works at its fastish pace, and the finale is altogether brighter. No 1 is another good example of confident interpretative control, with the horns staying relatively well behaved in the opening hunting calls and then choosing well when to make themselves heard elsewhere.

In the *Brandenburgs* there is competition aplenty, and the Dunedin Consort's recent fresh-air recording for Linn, likewise achieved without obtrusive quirks, takes some beating. Yet this version, for its unforced musicianship and general knowhow (not to mention its clear but rich recorded sound) is well worth its place in the race. **Lindsay Kemp**

Selected comparison:

Dunedin Consort, Butt (A/13) (LINN) CKD430

JS Bach

Keyboard Concertos – BWV1052; BWV1053; BWV1054; BWV1055; BWV1056; BWV1057; BWV1058

Zurich Chamber Orchestra / Yorck Kronenberg pf
Genuin ② GEN14323 (112' • DDD)



Performance intentions expressed in booklet interviews can often present difficulties for listeners. Here, the iconoclastic impression of Yorck Kronenberg conveyed as free-spirited boundary buster and juggler of his artistic pursuits, as writer and pianist, sets up a complete Bach solo keyboard concertos with expectations rather different to what we ultimately experience.

While all seven concertos are enterprisingly curated on distinct canvases – not least the F major (BWV1057), modelled on the Fourth *Brandenburg Concerto*, performed on the harpsichord –

Kronenberg's clear sense of identity for each 'transcription' (these Collegium Musicum pieces are all reworked from previous models, mostly violin concertos) is diluted by a consistent vocabulary of mannerisms which defines a general sympathy, or not, with this project.

Kronenberg partly adopts a 'period' approach with (almost) no *sostenuto* pedalling in the piano, matched by the strings of the Zürcher Kammerorchester who have emphatically switched on the *senza vibrato* button. With this – especially in the beautifully *galant* reading of the E major Concerto (BWV1053) – there is a strikingly deliberate and transparent contrapuntal dialogue between piano and strings to join the purposeful and fashionable rhythmic energy driving the outer movements.

Belying the idea of spontaneity and esprit, however, a studied placement of ornaments, often excessive trilling in place of colorific adventure, joins an increasingly incoherent compendium of gestures. These range from melodramatic *crescendos* in the slow movement of the D major, BWV1054 (not to mention curious hairpin surges in the first and an eccentric petering out in the final movement) to a geometric anti-lyricism in Kronenberg's furious first movement of the radiant A major (BWV1055).

The cocktail of musical choices here may simply derive from an aesthetic of Bach performance which is in the process of taking root. Unfortunately it's one which, as yet, is clunkily clad in hard-driven bass-lines and unyielding articulations which rarely take you out of the text and into Bachian Elysium.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Bartók • Tchaikovsky

Bartók Divertimento, Sz113

Tchaikovsky Serenade, Op 48

London Symphony Orchestra String Ensemble / Roman Simovic vn

LSO Live ② LSO0752 (56' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, October 27, 2013



Enterprisingly curated: Yorck Kronenberg directs the Zurich Chamber Orchestra from the piano in a collection of Bach concertos



**Tchaikovsky's
Serenade and Bartók's
Divertimento go**

well together, their liveliness and ease of invention concealing the brilliance and ingenuity of the craftsmanship. Tchaikovsky was 'terribly in love' with his work, he told his publisher, 'a piece from the heart'. The variety and subtlety of the textures make demands not only on performers but on the recording process, and all is well managed here. Simovic sets the Serenade off in stately, ceremonial style, drawing great warmth and depth of tone from the orchestra, but then raises the curtain, as it were, on marvellously subtle inventive patterns from which a sense of the footlights is never very far away. The Waltz, one of Tchaikovsky's best, and played with a delightful lilt here, confirms the balletic nature of the invention; and the slow movement, marked 'Elegy' but intentionally not one of his most profound, is warmly and lyrically played. The finale, maintaining the dance element as the players well understand, draws on a couple of folksongs in a manner that enraged the Vienna critic Eduard

Hanslick ('crude...a diminutive theme spins as monotonously as a top'), and here has the lively kick to it which it well merits.

Bartók's Divertimento is also charged with a sense of the dance, and has a comparable sense of enjoyment. Despite having been written in the tense months before he was forced to emigrate, the piece shares Tchaikovsky's sense of relish in its making, and the sense of an 18th-century concerto grosso is sustained when, brilliantly enjoyed by the players here, Bartók dives headlong into a double fugue.

John Warrack

Beethoven

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43 - Overture. Fidelio - Overture, Op 72c; Leonore Overture No 3, Op 72b. Egmont, Op 84 - Overture. Coriolan, Op 62. Die Weihe des Hauses, Op 124

Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen /

Paavo Järvi

RCA Red Seal (F) 88875 02232-2 (52' • DDD)



Out-and-out vibrato-less string tone from the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie

accentuates how Beethoven begins nearly all his major overtures with a note (mostly unison) that has no sense of pulse; offers no clue as to the harmony or more importantly rhythm of what will ensue; presents a Dogme-style bare stage in sound. It's a fine trick. Paavo Järvi is relentlessly alive to the setting of the play overtures, in which the dominant mode of expression is terse and tense and loud to match their subjects of embodied heroism and personal failure, and the function is to grab the audience by their necks where an opera overture entices them with hints of what's to come. Arriving at this realisation with the help of friends may account for Beethoven's reluctant abandonment of tweaks to *Leonore* for the E major flourish of *Fidelio*'s curtain-raiser.

Though short measure, the disc can hardly be listened to in one sitting; it functions as an overture of its own to a complete *Fidelio*, which should be nothing if not exhilarating. The stopped horns from afar in bar 30 of *Coriolan* are perfectly judged; quieter than Norrington's trailblazer, more exactly placed than the orchestra's recording with Harding. Järvi is so combative from the off that he can find no extra force for the tragic denouement, whereas Prometheus and Egmont travel further, and perhaps their music does too.

This is less a recording for enjoyment than confrontation with uncomfortable truths, and with a timpanist freed from punctuating cadence points to create his own part in the drama. He is surely too aggressive for the suspended dissonant sequences in *Fidelio*'s introduction, stealing the limelight from the clarinet, but more discreet for the symphonic canvas of *Leonore* No 3. Welcome relief from shrill piccolos and counterpunching bass arrives with a more conventionally spirited account of *The Consecration of the House* – though for some of us, the broad and serene good humour of Klemperer's EMI recordings may always hold sway here. **Peter Quantrill**

Berio



Calmo^a. Quattro versioni originali della Ritirata notturna di Madrid di L Boccherini. Sinfonia ^aVirpi Räsänen *mez* Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra / Hannu Lintu
Online (F) ODE1227-5 (54' • DDD/DSD)



From the last hurrah of Boccherini's four simultaneous nocturnal parties

disappearing round the street corner yet hanging in the night air of Madrid, emerges a rattle of bells and a singer, like a priestess with her thyrsus, who with a compilation of ancient and surrealist texts conducts a spirit across the threshold from life to death. *Calmo* (1974, expanded in 1989) is a tribute to Bruno Maderna, who had died the previous year, as devout and sincere to his memory and yet characteristic of its creator as the funeral tread of Boulez's *Rituel*. Any singer must exorcise the ghost of Cathy Berberian in this and other vocal works of Berio and, as the actor of heroines from Haydn to Nono, Virpi Räsänen has the measure of it. She uses more pure tone but has no shortage of the rich chest register required for the oracular pronouncement of lines from Psalm 57 and Homer's *Odyssey*.

Sinfonia is among a select group of works from the 1960s in danger of becoming a 'classic' – I'm thinking also of the *War Requiem* and *Eight Songs for a Mad King*. Maybe it isn't a danger at all – their publishers must be pleased, and the opportunity to see them in concert is always welcome – but there's a paradox that, through the very singularity of their form and forces as much as their music, they have come to represent a time and a kind of emotional and political energy

now hallowed but softened by memory, at risk even of becoming kitsch or cute.

The DG recording of *Sinfonia* conducted by Peter Eötvös is an example of this classicising tendency, always respectful of music that rebels against the very idea of demanding or giving respect. Heritage, in the shape of Mahler and Debussy and Strauss and the rest, is a set of musical tools to be picked up and set down at will. In Hannu Lintu's marvellous new recording I hear and admire a rediscovery of the impatience and invention that drove Berio to write it, in the forward, piano-led instrumental balance and the unapologetic grandeur of the finale's climax. The eight solo voices don't draw the attention as much as on other recordings but the import of their texts, both Lévi-Strauss and street slogans, is carried by the orchestral commentary, not least the excellent brass section of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra. Lintu's pacing is slightly more generous than Riccardo Chailly's on Decca and he uses this space to impassioned rhetorical effect, especially in the angry, still spaces of the second movement's elegy to Martin Luther King. **Peter Quantrill**

Sinfonia – selected comparisons:

Concertgebouw, Chailly (8/90) (DECC) 425 832-2DH
Gothenburg SO, Eötvös (9/05) (DG) 479 0342GTC

JD & JH Berlin

JD Berlin Sinfonias – a 5 for Cornett and Strings^a;

a 6 in A; a 8 in D. Violin Concerto in A^b

JH Berlin Sinfonia a 6 in C

^aAlexandra Opsahl *cornett* Norwegian Baroque

Orchestra / Gottfried von der Goltz ^bvn

Simax (F) PSC1331 (55' • DDD)



Born on the Lithuanian fringes of Prussia in the same year as CPE Bach,

brought up in what is now Latvia and trained in Copenhagen, Johan Daniel Berlin could have attracted the patriotic interest of three different modern-day countries in this, his anniversary year. As it is, his years as cathedral organist and leading musical light in Trondheim have here cast him as a Norwegian, as he has been in two previous recorded selections of his music by the Trondheim Chamber Orchestra (8/91) and the Trondheim Soloists. You get the picture.

The Oslo-based Norwegian Baroque Orchestra are the first period orchestra to give him a whole disc, and their brisk, stylish and clear-textured performances do him proud. They play four of his works, including two three-movement symphonies

in brightly attractive Baroque-into-*galant* style with rather a nice line in 'sentimental' flute-coloured slow movements, and a Violin Concerto with a typically cheerful late-Baroque Italian manner expertly demonstrated by Gottfried von der Goltz. The fourth work is a kind of cornett concerto which for sheer oddness – the cornett was a long-obsolete instrument in Berlin's day – must take some beating; the writing for it is rather trumpet-like, and it is good to hear it so nimbly negotiated by soloist Alexandra Opsahl, rendering the refuge of playing it on an actual trumpet unnecessary, in spite of the booklet's bizarre claim that this is what has happened.

This snapshot is complemented by a symphony by Berlin's son Johan Heinrich – a work inevitably in slightly later Classical style but no less pleasant to listen to – and by the inclusion in the artwork of illustrations of some of Johan Daniel's many inventions. Had I not mentioned them? **Lindsay Kemp**

Brahms

Symphony No 2, Op 73. Academic Festival

Overture, Op 80. Tragic Overture, Op 81

Budapest Festival Orchestra / Iván Fischer

Channel Classics (F) CCSSA33514 (68' • DDD)



Clemens Romijn's booklet-essay for this new Budapest recording of

Brahms's Second Symphony talks of the work as a 'paragon of clarity' and so in a sense is this recording of it, meticulously directed by Iván Fischer.

Mr Romijn's essay is headed 'The sunny Second Symphony', a view which Fischer's essentially lyric view of the work appears to endorse. For some, the symphony is more an essay in sunshine and shadow – with shadows which can on occasion seem very deep indeed. That said, this wonderfully lucid and finely realised reading does not suppress these elements; it merely refuses to underline them. Listening to the performance, I was reminded of Sir Adrian Boult's remark to Roy Plomley that he would rather have eight scores on his desert island than eight gramophone records. What Fischer and his players give us is the score.

I was less taken with Fischer's accounts of the two overtures. The *Tragic Overture*'s lengthy exposition mixes trenchancy and Sibelian chill in ideal measure but there is a rather too easeful account of the overture's wraith-like central development. As for the *Academic Festival Overture*, this emerges as



Hannu Lintu, chief conductor of the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, captures the patience and invention inherent in Berio's *Sinfonia*

more academic than festive. (Never before have I heard echoes here of the First Symphony!) No, on this occasion it is the symphony which is the thing.

Richard Osborne

Bray

At the Speed of Stillness^a. *Fire Burning in Snow*^b. *Oneiroi*^c. *Replay*^d. *Songs from Yellow Leaves*^e. *Caught in Treetops*^f

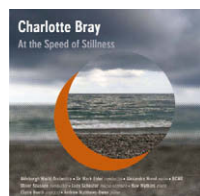
^aClaire Booth *sop* ^bLucy Schafer *mez*

^fAlexandra Wood *vn* ^{cd}Huw Watkins,

^eAndrew Matthews-Owen *pfs* ^{bd}Birmingham Contemporary Music Group / ^fOliver Knussen;

^aAldeburgh World Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder NMC Debut Discs (F) NMCD202 (71' • DDD • T)

^fRecorded live at Maltings Concert Hall, Snape, Suffolk, June 26, 2011



(b1982) is now at the forefront of younger British composers. The works on this 'portrait' disc range across three years, beginning with the powerful *concertante* writing of *Caught in Treetops* – inspired by poems of Rossetti and Lorca, and

beginning with a tensile cadenza which duly casts its aura over the respectively capricious and meditative movements. No less cohesive, *Replay* juxtaposes three contrasted musical types in a two-stage intensification, climaxing in an inward piano solo that underlines the essential unpredictability of a methodical process.

Of the two vocal works, *Yellow Leaves* sets Shakespeare-inspired haikus by Caroline Thomas which afford much dextrous word-setting, while *Fire Burning in Snow* sets poems by Nicki Jackowska whose focusing on lost love elicits a fervent response and the most tenuous of emotional resolutions. With its basis in the dream-spirits of Greek mythology, *Oneiroi* finds the composer equally at home with the solo piano medium as fleeting motifs disperse then reassemble to yield music of unexpected emotional breadth. Conversely, *At the Speed of Stillness* unfolds over an expansive orchestral canvas – the paradox of motion within stasis (whether in the written word or in physical power-lines) underlying a piece whose highly diverse textures outline an expressive progression left tantalisingly in abeyance at the close.

There is little doubt as to the commitment of these performances (not least the vocal pieces), while the



annotations are highly informative. Bray has several high-profile commissions in the pipeline, ensuring that her future development can only be followed with the greatest interest. Richard Whitehouse

Britten • Shostakovich

Britten Sinfonietta, Op 1 Shostakovich Cello Concerto No 1, Op 107^a. Symphony No 1, Op 10

^aSteven Isserlis *vc*

Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Teodor Currentzis

EuroArts (F)  205 9818; (F)  205 9814

(82' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0)

Recorded live at the Concertgebouw, Bruges, 2013



First off, a grateful nod to the EuroArts production team for abjuring from the bleeding chunk of music which usually accompanies

the menu. More puzzling choices are the reordering of the concert programme, which originally and sensibly began with Britten but now opens with the concerto, and the peculiarly sniffy booklet essay, which I presume is reprinted from the programme for the whole trilogy of Britten/Shostakovich concerts, of which this was the second.

hyperion NEW RELEASES

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ANDREW CARWOOD conductor



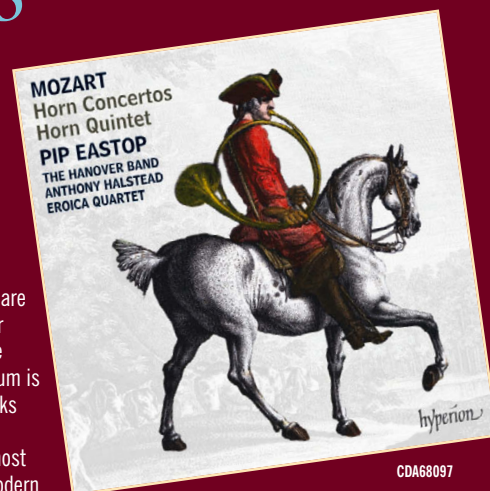
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ROYAL FLEMISH PHILHARMONIC
MARTYN BRABBINS conductor



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Then there is the still more personal question of body language. I remember one of Daniel Harding's first Proms in which he led Schoenberg's First Chamber Symphony as though it were the *Symphony of a Thousand*, and Teodor Currentzis's gestures often seem out of scale to the notes and the forces before him – though if the Mahler Chamber Orchestra get the point, that's what matters. Jumping around to face the audience on the last chord of the Shostakovich symphony I can do without, but others will find it fun and friendly, and if it's good enough for Sir Roger Norrington...

Finally, the music: the Sinfonietta is unconducted, one to a part, which makes good sense of the first movement's rapid exchange of ideas and allows for smoother coordination of the string parts that defeated the student players of the RCM who were first to attempt it. The Variations remind me that this was one of Abbado's orchestras in the way the 10 musicians listen to each other and always look to shape and lead the argument: the viola's lead into the final Tarantella is a delightful example. They are conversational partners with Steven Isserlis, who brings air and *rubato* to the motto theme of the concerto and takes the phrases of the slow movement in a single breath, remote from the dirge-like, Russian performing style associated with it. Sometimes this vocally flexible approach lets some notes lose focus or pitch – the coda of the first movement has some sour moments, though the oboe is also at fault – but he rides magnificently over the gathering waves of the cadenza and makes us fully aware of the physical effort involved in the finale. **Peter Quantrill**

Bruckner



Symphony No 5

Staatskapelle Dresden / Christian Thielemann

C Major Entertainment (F) DVD 717808;

(F) Blu-ray 717904 (89' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O)

Recorded live at the Semperoper, Dresden,

September 8 & 9, 2013



First impressions are of unclouded Brucknerian vistas, a noble, unforced unfolding with superb playing from the orchestra, well matched tempi (fences never rushed), so that no one episode upstages another inappropriately. There's plenty of 'give' in the string-playing, too, which is expressive and with a distinctive tonal bloom. Well-judged *accelerandos* (ie 21'03" into the first

movement) keep a sense of drama to the fore. Note the effective blend of brass, strings and timps towards the end of the *Allegro*, whereas the close of the same opening movement is both patient and majestic. The *Adagio* is equally well paced, not too slow and with an excellent solo oboe. The second set sounds almost Brahmsian in the way it blossoms (richly pulsing horns underpinning answering string lines), with majestically played climaxes. Breathtaking *pianissimos* charge the mood with extra levels of mystery, while the *Scherzo* features a rustically galumphing second subject. I particularly liked the transparency of the Trio, always genial and fluid, with a smooth-textured solo horn, delicate woodwinds and *pizzicato* strings, and sonorous brass choirs. The finale's opening, with its Beethovenian 'references back', maintains a feeling of suspense, the massive double fugue sounding purposeful but without losing a crucial sense of mobility. Here, as the episode progresses, one needs to sense a dancing soul with feet that don't quite match!

As in the first movement, tempo choices give the impression of an interpretation that has been thoroughly thought through, especially important in music that when insensitively handled can all too easily sound fragmented. There's a good 22 seconds' worth of rapturous silence between the mighty closing chord and the beginning of what turns out to be equally rapturous applause. Neither austere in the manner of Wand nor viscerally supercharged along Fürtwanglerian lines, Christian Thielemann and his Dresden orchestra offer, generally speaking, honest reportage plain and simple, a Fifth to savour repeatedly. Thielemann's rostrum manner is entirely natural and the camerawork, like the musical performance, eschews irritating eccentricity. Altogether a distinguished production, and very well recorded. **Rob Cowan**

Brun

Piano Concerto. Divertimento. Variations

Tomáš Nemeč pf

Bratislava Symphony Orchestra / Adriano

Guild (M) GMCD7409 (73' • DDD)



composer Fritz Brun (1878-1959). Completed in May 1946, the Piano Concerto in A major received at least three

public performances (in 1948, 1950 and 1953) by dedicatee Franz Josef Hirt (a protégé of Egon Petri and Alfred Cortot), partnered by Volkmar Andreae, Hans Rosbaud and Brun himself. A big-hearted, engagingly protean canvas it proves, too, lasting some 38 minutes and couched in an idiom much indebted to Brahms, Reger and Busoni. Unfortunately, the concerto's sizeable (and, for the soloist, technically taxing) outer movements are inclined to sprawl – even after a handful of hearings the thread remains stubbornly elusive – but we do get a deeply felt and often haunting slow movement marked *Andante sostenuto*, which is scored with rare delicacy (Brun asks for just one clarinet and two each of viola, cello and double bass). Rather more readily assimilable are the 1944 Variations for piano and orchestra on an original theme (commissioned by Paul Sacher) and 1954 Divertimento for piano and strings, the latter especially displaying a felicitous touch, variety of mood and sense of whimsy that are endearing.

Intriguing repertoire, then, though I for one would question whether it truly measures up to the claims made for it in the booklet. However, it would be mean of me not to single out for praise the tireless contribution of pianist Tomáš Nemeč; indeed, the Slovak virtuoso displays poetry, polish and stamina in abundance. He is ably supported by Adriano and the Bratislava SO, whose spirited efforts have also been captured with commendable presence and warmth. **Andrew Achenbach**

Carwithen · Jacob · Williamson

'Concertos for Piano & Strings'

Carwithen Piano Concerto Jacob Piano

Concerto No 1 Williamson Piano Concerto No 2

Mark Bebbington pf Innovation Chamber

Ensemble / Richard Jenkinson

Somm Celeste (F) SOMMCD254 (67' • DDD)



Mark Bebbington is fast becoming the Iris Loveridge *de nos jours* with his championship

of neglected British piano music. There is, though, the danger of a certain anonymity about these good-but-not-great composers. Cases in point are these three concertos for piano and strings, two by British composers, one by a colonial interloper. Heard blind it would be hard to tell Jacobs, Williamson and Carwithen apart, especially when all are written for the same forces.

Recorded in the palpably empty CBSO Centre with a well-judged piano-and-

orchestra balance and a lovely warm depth to the strings, the disc opens with the first commercial recording of Gordon Jacob's Concerto No 1, premiered in 1927 by Sir Henry Wood and its dedicatee Arthur Benjamin. Impressionistic at times, surprisingly astringent at others, its three short movements make an attractive work redolent of the period, as is the longest (33'28") of the three concertos here, that by Doreen Carwithen (1922-2003) from two decades later. A composition pupil of William Alwyn, whose second wife she became, and probably the only composer with her Christian name, Carwithen is not a memorable melodist. She reflects the period of post-war austerity rather well, her unsmiling material more likely to rouse admiration for her craftsmanship.

By contrast, and in between these two, comes Malcolm Williamson's Concerto No 2 in F sharp minor, written in just eight days in 1960 and described by the composer as 'an overtly Australian work aiming at spontaneity and vigour rather than profundity'. This is certainly true of the two frolicsome outer movements, the latter's exuberant jazz-inflected main subject putting one in mind of Malcolm Arnold, but it is the sombre, dissonant central movement that is most affecting, one of the highlights of this crusading disc with its excellent booklet. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Connesson

Cello Concerto^a. *Lucifer*

^aJérôme Pernoo *vc* Monte Carlo Philharmonic

Orchestra / Jean-Christophe Spinosi

DG/Discovery © 481 1166 (66' • DDD)



Listen blind and you'd never guess this was music by a Frenchman operating

in the post-Boulez era, the best clues being the iridescent sonorities achieved throughout and the reliance on early Messiaen as a model for the paradisiacal element of the third movement of the Cello Concerto (2008). As Guillaume Connesson himself admits, Shostakovich, John Adams, pop and jazz mean more to him than his intellectualising predecessors, so it is perhaps inevitable that the great Russian should influence key moments in his own Cello Concerto. Of course Shostakovich was writing for Rostropovich in a very different, anti-hedonistic cultural climate. Connesson's more accessible piece is dedicated to Jérôme Pernoo, who plays it here with evident authority and commitment.

Now in his forties, Connesson is a professional to his fingertips, and should you warm to the work of the classier commercial composers and orchestrators you may find his world wholly congenial. It is those sympathetic to the traditional contemporary music scene who might be taken aback by the brazenness of it all. Connesson's retro, razzle-dazzle eclecticism knows no bounds: a bouncy rhythm borrowed here, a shiny instrumental effect there, glass harmonica and all. Dangerously familiar shards of Adams, Lutosławski et al can be the one 'modern' element enlivening a conventional romantic texture. Blink and *Lucifer* (2011) reverts back into *Daphnis* or *Jeux* or *Spartacus* or *The Rite of Spring*. The list is almost endless. For a ballet score contemplating Satan's casting out of heaven alongside the legends of Prometheus and the Grail, Connesson would seem to have gone easy on the metaphysics.

Is his really a major voice? There's no doubting the enormous effectiveness of the ballet music in particular. Unprofound yet glamorous and self-evidently danceable, it makes several recent full-length scores of its type seem that much thinner. But whatever happened to the old idea that a composer should craft an idiom if not indubitably new then at least indubitably his own?

On its own terms the present disc is a conspicuous success. The Monte Carlo forces are galvanised by Jean-Christophe Spinosi into playing of fire and energy, and the booklet takes in a helpful composer interview. Non-sceptics should seek out the earlier *Cosmic Trilogy* (Chandos, 3/10), immortalising Connesson's association with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and its erstwhile Music Director Stéphane Denève. DG's sound is a little less spacious, its physical presentation oddly flawed. The album's French-language text is not difficult to read but the English translation, grey then brown on grubbily framed off-white, is presumably not intended for the over-fifties. Perhaps we oldies aren't expected to dabble in postmodernism.

David Gutman

Dickinson

Violin Concerto^a. Piano Concerto^b.

Organ Concerto^c. *Merseyside Echoes*^d

^aChloë Hanslip *vn* ^bHoward Shelley *pf*

^cJennifer Bate *org* ^bBBC Symphony Orchestra /

David Atherton; ^aBBC National Orchestra of Wales / Clark Rundell

Heritage © HTGCD276 (76' • DDD)

^bRecorded 1986, from HMV EL270439-1 (8/86)



Composer, pianist and author: Peter Dickinson has enjoyed a long and successful

career in all three fields and it is good to see his own music coming to the fore – this disc being one of six that Heritage made available for his 80th birthday (last November). Despite their relative succinctness (each of them lasting around 20 minutes), these three concertos exemplify the resourceful and subtle interplay between 'popular' and 'art' music which has long been central to his thinking.

In the Organ Concerto (1971), a blues-inflected setting of a Byron poem underlies music that builds to an intensive climax before subsiding into a silence the more telling given the highly variegated textures that had prevailed. Jennifer Bate gives an assured reading, as does Howard Shelley of the Piano Concerto (1979-84) written for him and which takes the formal trajectory of the earlier work on to another level with its intricate and often confrontational dialogue. This takes in a scintillating cadenza then sees an upright piano emerge within the orchestra with its own ragtime idea, so bringing about the seismic culmination prior to a magical evanescence.

The newly recorded Violin Concerto (1986) is a memorial to Ralph Holmes, whose artistry informs its greater restraint and inwardness of content with its deft allusions to Beethoven's *Spring* Sonata, and from which a nominally classical four-movement structure can be discerned. Chloë Hanslip has the full measure of this pivoting between virtuosity and rumination, while Clark Rundell is alive to the orchestral writing both here and in the overture-like *Merseyside Echoes* (1986), with its engaging evocation of the Merseybeat sound exemplified by The Beatles. Detailed notes from the composer further enhance this absorbing and highly recommendable release. **Richard Whitehouse**

Dukas

L'apprenti sorcier. Symphony in C.

La péri – Fanfare; Poème dansé

RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra /

Jean-Luc Tingaud

Naxos © 8 573296 (72' • DDD)



It's been a good few years since I last encountered a brand-new recording of Paul



Busy in Basle: the city's symphony orchestra and Dennis Russell Davies issue recordings of music by Glass, Schubert and Stravinsky (reviews on pages 32, 37 and 39)

Dukas's big-hearted and meatily argued Symphony in C, so a warm welcome to this clear-headed and uncommonly sensitive account under Jean-Luc Tingaud. Not only does the Frenchman secure a commendably polished and infectiously enthusiastic response from the RTÉ National SO (whose strings are perhaps lacking the very last ounce of fibre and tonal heft), he shapes this glorious music with pleasing character, flexibility and authority.

The slumbering, gorgeously lyrical slow movement goes especially well – and how satisfyingly he negotiates the symphony's giddily thrusting closing pages. Competition is strong: both the Martinon and Jordan remain great personal favourites, and rival readings from Weller, Fournet, Foster and Slatkin also have much to offer, but Tingaud's is certainly a version to reckon with and should be snapped up by anyone who has yet to fall under the spell of this criminally underrated score.

The remaining items receive no less convincing treatment: *L'apprenti sorcier* sounds as fresh as the day it was conceived, possessing swagger, point and mischief to spare, while Tingaud's *La péri* – a memorably voluptuous, intoxicatingly fragrant affair – is also up there with the very best (Zinman and the Rotterdam PO

on Philips, Jordan and Fournet). At bargain price, and boasting strikingly transparent sound, this Naxos release is surely not to be missed. **Andrew Achenbach**

Symphony – selected comparisons:

Martinon (7/74⁸) (EMI) 763160-2

LPO, Weller (6/76⁸) (ELOQ) ELQ467 610-2

French Nat Orch, Slatkin (5/99) (RCA) 09026 68802-2

Monte Carlo PO, Foster (CLAV) 50 9102

Sym, La péri – selected comparisons:

SRO, A Jordan (6/85⁸) (ERAT) 2564 64418-1

Netherlands Rad PO, Fournet (6/93⁸) (REGI) RRC1344

La péri – selected comparison:

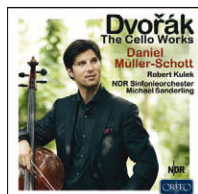
Rotterdam PO, Zinman (5/79⁸) (PHIL) 454 127-2PM

Dvořák

Cello Concerto, Op 104 B191^a. Romantic Pieces, Op 75 B150^b. Rondo, Op 94 B171^a. Silent Woods, Op 68 No 5 B173^a. Slavonic Dance, Op 46 B78 No 8^b. Songs my mother taught me, Op 55 B104 No 4^b

Daniel Müller-Schott vc^b **Robert Kulek** pf

^aNDR Symphony Orchestra / Michael Sanderling
Orfeo © C855 141A (79' • DDD)



Daniel Müller-Schott's discography already includes many peaks of the cello

repertoire, so the addition of the Dvořák Concerto fills a significant gap. It's a very fine performance, with all the technical challenges easily surmounted, and full of searching expressive detail. Of other recent recordings, Alisa Weilerstein's provides an illuminating comparison. She has the special advantage of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra and Jiří Bělohlávek as accompanists; by their side the polished, beautifully balanced playing of the NDR orchestra lacks something of the Czechs' natural vitality (a good example being the trumpets in the first-movement *tutti*). With slightly faster tempi and a lighter, more volatile style, Weilerstein brings the music vividly to life, but there's no doubt that Müller-Schott, with his thoughtfully varied articulations and tone colours, digs more deeply into the concerto's expressive detail, in particular bringing out the sense of yearning that's such a powerful aspect of the music. And his announcement of the finale's main theme has a rhythmic strength that few cellists have equalled.

The contrast with Weilerstein continues with the Rondo in G minor and the arrangements – Müller-Schott darker and more profound in the Rondo and *Silent Woods*, while Weilerstein's verve and elegance give her the edge in the

Slavonic Dance and 'Songs my mother taught me' (this last a simpler, more tasteful transcription).

The four *Romantic Pieces* are an especial pleasure – as effective on cello and piano as with violin, at least in this beautiful performance, in which the elegiac finale piece really benefits from the cello's deeper tones.

Duncan Druce

Concerto, etc – selected comparison:

Weilerstein, Czech PO, Bělohávek, Polonsky

(7/14) (DECC) 478 5705DH

Elgar • Vaughan Williams

Elgar Introduction and Allegro, Op 47. Serenade, Op 20 **Vaughan Williams** Violin Concerto^a. The Lark Ascending^a

^aTamsin Waley-Cohen *vn*

Orchestra of the Swan / David Curtis

Signum Ⓢ SIGCD399 (59' • DDD)



The comparative rarity here is the Violin Concerto, which shows

Vaughan Williams toying with fashionable 1920s neo-classicism. His reference point is clearly Bach; the dialogue between the older composer's purposeful rhythms and counterpoint and his own more meditative manner proves especially fertile in the slow central movement. This performance is very convincing – decisive and clear-cut in articulating the Bachian motifs but removing strong accentuation whenever a dreamier mood appears. And there are some fine imaginative touches; I was particularly taken with Tamsin Waley-Cohen's lovely *flautando* tone as the finale quietly drifts away.

In the *Introduction and Allegro*, the orchestra is similarly adept at making all the contrasts tell; the fugal development is especially successful in its characterisation and cumulative impact. However, there's a disadvantage in performing this work with a chamber orchestra: the opening lacks sufficient grandeur, and when the 'viola tune' (beautifully played on its first appearance) returns in the coda, it fails to provide a satisfying peroration. The Serenade, though, is perfectly suited to this body of strings; the performance has all the gracefulness and touching expression one could wish for.

In *The Lark Ascending*, some of the wind entries have too strong a presence, momentarily spoiling the illusion of wide vistas. And the way Tamsin Waley-Cohen lingers over the initial fluttering motif

doesn't enhance its magical effect.

This said, it's beautiful violin-playing, sustaining the broad arcs of the lark's flight most convincingly. All in all, it's a most attractive programme, performed with real sympathy and understanding.

Duncan Druce

Ellis

Concert Music^a. Vale Royal Suite^a. Diversions^b.

September Threnody^b. Celebration^c. Solus^d

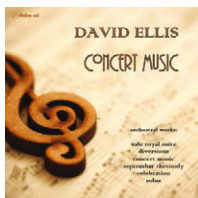
^aManchester Sinfonia / Richard Howarth;

^bNorthern Chamber Orchestra / Nicholas Ward;

^cRNCM Sinfonia / Sir Edward Downes;

^dManchester Camerata / Frank Cliff

Divine Art Ⓢ DDA25119 (69' • DDD)



Born in Liverpool in 1933, David Ellis was a prize-winning composition student

of Thomas Pitfield at Manchester's Royal College of Music (where fellow incumbents included Birtwistle, Maxwell Davies, John Ogdon and his wife-to-be, Patricia Cunliffe). He joined the BBC's Music Department in Manchester as a producer in 1964, eventually rising to the position of Head of Music, BBC North. After leaving the Corporation in 1986, he took up posts first with the Northern Chamber Orchestra (as Artistic Director and Composer-in-Residence) and then, in 1994, with the Portuguese SO in Lisbon (where he served as Assistant to the Chief Conductor, Alvaro Cassuto).

The works on this valuable compilation span some 52 years, from the agreeably rugged and rigorous *Concert Music* for strings from 1959 (premiered by Bryden Thomson and the BBC Welsh Orchestra 13 years later) to the powerfully affecting *September Threnody* (completed in 2011 and written in memory of his wife). Both *Solus* (1973) and *Diversions* (1974) were first given by the Manchester Camerata under Frank Cliff and are cast as sets of compact and inventive variations – the latter comprises an especially nourishing and witty specimen – while the exuberant and impeccably crafted *Celebration* was a 1980s commission from Sir John Manduell for the RNCM's newly founded postgraduate orchestra. That just leaves the winsome, five-movement *Vale Royal Suite*, fashioned for a Cheshire-based amateur string group under its then chief, Richard Howarth. Suffice it to say, performances are uniformly excellent and recordings of varying vintage have all come up freshly. Do investigate this very likeable collection.

Andrew Achenbach

L Glass

'Complete Symphonies, Vol 1'

Symphony No 3, 'Forest', Op 30.

Sommerliv (Summer Life), Op 27

Staatsorchester Rheinische Philharmonie /

Daniel Raiskin

CPO Ⓢ CPO777 525-2 (65' • DDD)



Louis Glass (1864–1936) was a close contemporary of his fellow

countryman Carl Nielsen and, like the slightly better-known Rued Langgaard, he came to feel bitter that Nielsen's growing reputation had eclipsed his own. Both he and Nielsen composed six symphonies but Glass was earlier off the starting blocks, so that his Third was composed in 1900–01, a full decade before Nielsen's. This *Forest* Symphony comes with a more frankly descriptive programme than any Nielsen would have countenanced and its style is more complaisant, with more Bruckner and Franck in the mix and less Beethoven and Brahms. Occasionally, as at the very opening, it strikes gold and raises hopes of real distinction; parts of the second movement chime euphoniously with the more romantic passages of Nielsen's comic opera *Maskarade*, composed five years later. More often, though, Glass hits baser metal, and his structures are relatively predictable, especially in their recycling of ideas from movement to movement. Even so, the orchestration is expertly tailored; and as an example of warm-hearted, serenade-like symphonism at the turn of the 20th century, Glass's *Forest* Symphony makes for a pleasant excursion, especially in a performance as refined and imaginative as this one (which is to say, streets ahead of the rival Danacord version).

The five-movement suite *Summer Life*, here receiving its first recording, was probably composed just before the symphony. This is an equally undemanding makeweight, its frank descriptiveness occasionally shading into naive, here-we-go-round-the-maypole folksiness but never suggesting less than a competent craftsman and sympathetic spirit at work.

David Fanning

Sym No 3 – comparative version:

Ploudiv PO, Todorov (DANA) DACOCD542

P Glass

Symphony No 4, 'Heroes'

Basle Symphony Orchestra /

Dennis Russell Davies

Orange Mountain Music Ⓢ OMM0096 (48' • DDD)



If Philip Glass's Symphony No 2 is his 'Beethoven' symphony (its ending almost

quotes the famous theme from Beethoven's Fifth), the Ninth his homage to Mahler, then his Symphony No 4 is arguably closer in spirit to Bruckner. The opening, with its stepwise shift from F minor to E flat major via major and minor iterations of an A flat chord, even possesses something of Bruckner's harmonic imprint.

In fact, the work's main source of influence could hardly be further removed from the symphonic tradition. As its title suggests, *Heroes* is based on David Bowie's album of the same name – the second of his so-called Berlin trilogy. Bowie's first Berlin album furnished materials for Glass's Symphony No 1 (*Low*) but the composer's approach is different here. Rather than incorporating wholesale sections, Glass instead takes small fragments of ideas from a number of Bowie and Eno tracks and weaves them into the symphonic fabric.

For example, the Phrygian scale patterns and main melody of the second movement ('Abdumajid') are taken from an

instrumental track of the same name (which did not even appear on the original album). In the third movement, Glass starts off by quoting the portentous chromatic descending four-note figure heard at the beginning of 'Sense of doubt' but the music soon follows its own course. Indeed, the more open-ended, fluid and less rigid formal designs of the three instrumental tracks heard on 'Heroes' are used to best effect in this symphony.

It's worth noting, too, that the performance, played with a combination of warmth and vigour by the Sinfonieorchester Basel, deviates in a number of significant ways from the original recording released in 1997 on Point Music (American Composers Orchestra with Dennis Russell Davies again conducting, reissued by Universal). The first movement is almost twice as long. On the Point recording, the opening theme is heard immediately after sustained chords in low brass, at around the one-minute mark. On this recording, the theme is prefigured by an extended section in low strings and winds. Therefore the main theme 'proper' does not start until almost two minutes into the symphony. Other extensions and

additions are to be found elsewhere, too, all of which draws Bruckner's spirit even closer to the surface of the work.

Pwyl ap Siôn

Selected comparison:

American Composers Orch, Davies

(DECC) 475 0752PM2; (DG) 479 3434GTC

Gounod

Symphonies – No 1; No 2; No 3 (fragment)

Svizzera Italiana Orchestra / Oleg Caetani

CPO © CPO777 863-2 (68' • DDD)



By no means mainstream repertoire, Gounod's two completed symphonies

nevertheless fully merit the finesse and *joie de vivre* that these performances by the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana under Oleg Caetani bring to them. Mendelssohn is generally cited as the principal parallel to Gounod's manner of symphonic writing but there is an element of early Schubert in the D major First Symphony and of Beethoven in the E flat major Second. Charm of melody is allied to an infallible technique and a lucid use of orchestral timbres. If the harmony sometimes



Elaine Goodall
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bespeaks of a Romantic temperament, there is something of a Classical order in the music's organisation and structure.

Besides the two symphonies, both of them composed in 1855, this disc also includes the premiere recording of a symphonic fragment in C major: the torso of a first-movement *Andante molto maestoso* – *Moderato* and a complete slow movement. These were written much later, probably in the early 1890s, when Gounod was nearing the end of his life. Although the style of the music harks back to the Gounod of old as if Brahms and César Franck had never existed, there is a weight and urgency to the three and a half extant minutes of the first movement that are tantalisingly auspicious of an intense symphonic argument; and the *Andante*, while still not entirely freed from Mendelssohn's influence, emits an affecting autumnal glow. Throughout, Caetani conjures up lovely, affectionate and spirited playing of music that never fails to delight through its warmth, taste and vivacity.

Geoffrey Norris

Jongen • Lazzari

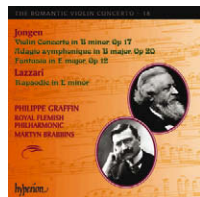
'The Romantic Violin Concerto, Vol 18'

Jongen Violin Concerto, Op 17. Adagio symphonique, Op 20. Fantasia, Op 12

Lazzari Rapsodie

Philippe Graffin *vn* Royal Flemish Philharmonic Orchestra / Martyn Brabbins

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68005 (66' • DDD)



To those of us who know the Belgian composer Joseph Jongen (1873-1953) chiefly through his organ music (the *Sonata eroica* and the magnificent *Symphonie concertante*), these three violin works written in his twenties will come as surprises. Strongly tonal and lyrical, Jongen's chief influences seem to be Richard Strauss and César Franck (even if I kept thinking 'Chausson: *Poème*' for much of the time; certainly if you like that you'll like the Jongen pieces).

Philippe Graffin begins with the earliest work here, the Fantasia in E major from 1898. It has a gorgeous honeyed melody as its main subject. A better title might have given it wider currency. The more amorphous *Adagio symphonique* from three years later comes from the same stable, with the soloist flying high over a rich orchestral texture. It is this characteristic that is most evident in the three movements of the Violin Concerto. Written in 1900 for his friend the violinist

Emile Chaumont (1878-1942), it was dedicated, when finally published in 1914, to Eugène Ysaÿe, an admirer of Jongen's music but who seems not to have been taken with it. Perhaps its meandering, rhapsodic manner, like a long act of love-making without a satisfactory conclusion, made it an insufficiently effective vehicle. The premiere was given in Paris the same year by Charles Herman (another Belgian violinist) and after that pretty much forgotten.

The substantial (16'52") makeweight is the *Rapsodie* in E minor by Sylvio Lazzari (1857-1944), written in 1922 but in very much the same language as Jongen. My one reservation is Graffin's place in the sound balance. His tender, slender tone in softer passages is one of the disc's main attractions but is not sufficiently brilliant to match with equal vigour the full might of the orchestra. **Jeremy Nicholas**

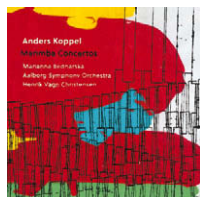
Koppel

Marimba Concertos^a – No 1; No 2;

No 3, 'Linzer'; No 4, 'In memory of things transient'. PS to a Concerto

Marianna Bednarska *mari*^a Aalborg Symphony Orchestra / Henrik Vagn Christensen

Dacapo Ⓢ 6 220595 (79' • DDD/DSD)



When Anders Koppel (b1947) was part of the rock band Savage Rose I doubt he – or anyone else – would have expected him to pen four concertos for marimba. He has produced a sizeable number of concertos, such as those for saxophone recorded by his son Benjamin in 2005 or the collection reviewed by David Fanning (11/11; both also on Dacapo).

The First Marimba Concerto (1995) was written as a test piece for the Luxembourg International Percussion Competition. Two compact movements are succeeded by a much longer bravura finale which rather unbalances the structure, and in truth outstays its welcome a touch away from competitive occasions. The later ones are more satisfying musically. The string-orchestral accompaniment of the Second (2000) provides a leaner context and expressively the subject of time's passing – suggested perhaps by the millennium – is gripping. The Third Concerto (2002, rev 2003), like the Fourth (2006), was written for the virtuoso Martin Grubinger. No 3, *Linzer*, is named for the Bruckner Orchestra in Linz, who premiered it, and deploys their standard late-Romantic instrumental complement. No 4, *In memory*

of things transient, is the most varied, adding an organ into the mix in an engaging eight-movement suite occasioned by the 250th anniversary of Mozart's birth and including quotes from Mozart, Balkan folk music and an old pop tune of Koppel's.

The young Marianna Bednarska plays all four works – and the solo encore *PS to a Concerto* (1995) – with élan and is expertly supported by the Aalborg Symphony Orchestra. Dacapo's sound is superb. Listening to this disc is a hugely enjoyable way to spend 79 minutes.

Guy Rickards

Mendelssohn • Schumann

Mendelssohn Symphony No 3, 'Scottish', Op 56.

The Hebrides (Fingal's Cave), Op 26

Schumann Piano Concerto, Op 54^a

^aMaria João Pires *pf* London Symphony

Orchestra / Sir John Eliot Gardiner

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Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

January 21, 2014. Video also available to stream (rent for £3.99) or download (buy for £8.99 or, in HD, for £10.99) at digitaltheatre.com



Two discs here, the first a Blu-ray with visuals, the second a hybrid SACD. In

terms of sound, the balance is realistic on both, with much internal clarity and a battling edge to Mendelssohn's dramatic *tutti*. Sir John Eliot Gardiner's *Hebrides* Overture must be one of the most thrilling ever recorded, adding volleys of sea-spray to well-navigated execution, achieving en route some breathtaking *pianissimos* (ie from around 4'50", and the clarinet at 7'22" just before the coda). Ebb and flow is of the essence in this proto-Wagnerian masterpiece and there's plenty of it here, with vivid *accelerandos* and a subtle use of vibrato. So nice when scholarship sits comfortably on the sidelines and doesn't compromise the narrative.

The Schumann Concerto with Maria João Pires is conceptually similar to the version she made with Claudio Abbado – chosen tempi are near identical – except that here orchestral textures are maybe just a little lighter. Gardiner makes a beeline for individual instrumental details, keeping important woodwind lines to the fore (the oboe and clarinet in the first movement) without distorting the overall effect. He treats the introduction to the *Scottish* Symphony most sensitively, attending carefully to relative note values while

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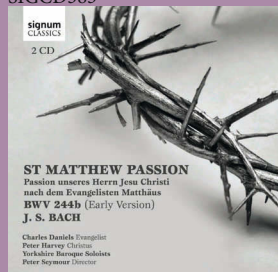
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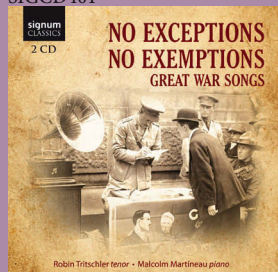
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maintaining the flow, marking a subtle *rallentando* before the onset of the *Allegro un poco agitato*, though the *pianissimo* could have been even more marked. Taut and driven, the main movement goes well. The *scherzo* has a frantic touch of rush hour about it – ‘fast’ and ‘poised’ aren’t mutually exclusive concepts – and in the *Adagio*’s processional, Gardiner leans more heavily than most on the first note of the phrase. But the performance’s highlight comes towards the close of the sprightly finale, the wind-down before the *Allegro maestoso assai*, where quietly contemplative clarinets are joined by the bassoon and there’s a well-judged pause before the coda enters (and which ultimately picks up in tempo). That passage alone marks this out as a truly memorable performance.

Incidentally, the Blu-ray disc includes, in addition to fine sound, crystal-clear video footage of the same concert performance (January 21, 2014, with the upper strings of the orchestra standing in the *Scottish*) and Pires’s sensitively played ‘encore’ – ‘Vogel als Prophet’ from Schumann’s *Waldszenen*. Camerawork is a little too ‘busy-busy’ for my liking (I’m far more likely to return to the purely audio hybrid SACD) but it’s great to have the option of watching it.

Rob Cowan

Mozart

Four Horn Concertos^a. Horn Quintet, K407^b

Pip Eastop *hn*^bEroica Quartet;

^aThe Hanover Band / Anthony Halstead

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68097 (73’ • DDD)



In the Norris household, and doubtless in many others, Mozart’s

horn concertos = Dennis Brain with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Herbert von Karajan, a 1953 EMI recording that is still in the catalogue to this very day. This new version, however, is so different that any comparisons would serve no particular purpose. Pip Eastop plays a natural horn akin to the type available to the virtuoso for whom Mozart wrote the four concertos, Joseph Leutgeb. Mozart clearly did not feel in any way hidebound by the horn’s limited range of easily attainable notes. As Eastop says in a booklet-note, ‘to play the hand horn is to wrestle with nature...[it] simply doesn’t want to cooperate with at least half of the notes Mozart threw at it’.

That said, these performances have eloquent fluency. If, as Eastop says, ‘melodies have to be physically wrenched

into shape from both ends of the instrument’, the only signs of effort here are in the sudden shifts of colour on those notes that are produced by manipulating the right hand in the instrument’s bell – a process that was obviated when the horn acquired valves in the 19th century. Those who prefer more consistency of timbre might not be won over, though you would have to go a long way to hear such a refined *legato* line as Eastop achieves. With lucid input from The Hanover Band and from the Eroica Quartet in the Quintet, these performances have a musical integrity over and above historical interest.

Geoffrey Norris

Prokofiev

Symphonies – No 1, ‘Classical’, Op 25; No 2,

Op 40. Sinfonietta, Op 5/48. Autumnal Sketch

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra /

Kirill Karabits

Onyx Ⓢ ONYX4139 (79’ • DDD)



This is the second release in Kirill Karabits’s Prokofiev

symphony cycle, opening with the modernistic Second (1924–25) in a realisation of unrivalled clarity and balance, closely observed by the microphones. When Karabits spoke to the audience prior to a performance at the Lighthouse, Poole, he made much of the ear-lashing to come. The recording feels less confrontational. Should you prefer the music redder in tooth and claw, try sampling alternative views from the older complete sets. There’s Gergiev and the LSO, foregrounding timpani and percussion, or the classic Rozhdestvensky account (1962) in which Soviet-era brass ravage the texture like buzz-saws. The second-movement theme and variations is in any case more eclectic in style, mixing if not exactly matching just about all the Prokofievs we have ever known.

Marin Alsop, who couples the first two symphonies in her own Prokofiev series, is arguably too urbane in No 2 but her genial approach suits the ubiquitous *Classical* better than Karabits’s cooler manner. For all its nimble virtuosity, his rather lean-sounding band sounds a little lost in what has become an ampler acoustic, woodwind overly recessed. The outer movements, intriguingly linear, expose secondary string lines rarely heard, only there’s less in the way of forward momentum. While by no means infallible, Alsop’s players sound as if they are enjoying themselves more. It’s a pity that neither rendition permits the

harmonic displacements of Prokofiev’s Gavotte to speak for themselves.

The present disc runs to nearly 80 minutes through the inclusion of a brace of extras. Alsop has just *Dreams* (1910) – but then her asking price is that much lower. Karabits’s biggest offering is the easy-going Sinfonietta (1909 and subsequently revised). Riccardo Muti recorded its five appealing movements in the 1970s but it has otherwise tended to remain the province of specialist conductors from the former Soviet bloc. *Autumnal Sketch* is rarer still, a seven-minute evocation contemporaneous with *Dreams*, composed when Prokofiev and Myaskovsky were apprentice composers in thrall to Scriabin and the Rachmaninov of *The Isle of the Dead*. Recommended despite minor reservations. **David Gutman**

Symphonies – selected comparisons:

Moscow RSO, Rozhdestvensky

(5/73⁸) (MELO) MELCD100 1797

LSO, Gergiev (6/06) (PHIL) 475 7655PM4

São Paulo SO, Alsop (12/14) (NAXO) 8 573353

Sinfonietta – selected comparison:

Philb Orch, Muti (4/78⁸) (EMI) 097982-2

Ravel

‘Orchestral Works, Vol 2’

Ma Mère l’Oye. Pavane pour une infante défunte. Une barque sur l’océan. Shéhérazade – Ouverture de féerie. Menuet antique. Fanfare pour L’éventail de Jeanne

SWR Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stuttgart /

Stéphane Denève

Hänssler Classic Ⓢ CD93 325 (66’ • DDD)



During his years with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 2005 to 2012,

Stéphane Denève devoted much of his recording time to the Naxos discs of Roussel’s symphonies. Now that he is in charge of the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra he seems to be carrying on with the French repertoire but has turned his attention to Ravel. This is the second volume in a series that started last year with *Boléro*, *La valse*, *Le tombeau de Couperin*, *Alborada del grazioso* and the *Rapsodie espagnole* (2/14).

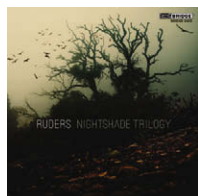
Here, the main works are *Ma Mère l’Oye* and *Pavane pour une infante défunte* but there are also some rarities, including *Shéhérazade* – not the well-known song-cycle of 1903 but a substantial, 13-minute overture written in 1898 for an abandoned opera based on the Arabian Nights. Ravel largely disowned it later on, voicing his particular dislike of the welter of whole-

tone scales that conjure up the subject's exotic atmosphere, but in fact it's not at all bad. Maybe it lacks later sophistication and might serve more satisfactorily as a symphonic picture than as an opera overture but it bears many of Ravel's familiar hallmarks, not least in matters of luminous orchestration, which Denève and the Stuttgart orchestra interpret with animation and with persuasive ideas about the music's dramatic rise and fall. The other works, too, testify to Denève's experience in this music, with colours finely etched in, a fluidity of movement and a real sense that he has his finger firmly on the Ravel pulse. **Geoffrey Norris**

Ruders

'Nightshade Trilogy'
Nightshade^a. The Second Nightshade^b.
Finale Nightshade^c

^aCapricorn / Oliver Knussen; ^{b,c}Odense
Symphony Orchestra / ^bPaul Mann, ^cScott Yoo
Bridge © BRIDGE9433 (51' • DDD)



The first of Ruders's *Nightshade Trilogy* was composed in 1986 for the London-based

Capricorn Ensemble, who here give it a superbly spooky performance under Oliver Knussen. The music is all about elemental contrasts, which the 10-piece ensemble is cannily chosen to enable. And what a superbly discomforting opening: everything something too low, too high, too dense or too abrasive. Not quite like the familiar Ruders, then, if there is such a thing, but a very useful reminder of his musical range, as well as the beginning of an utterly absorbing journey.

Two commissions followed – from the St Magnus Festival for a chamber orchestra work in 1991, and from the New York Philharmonic in 2003. Taken together, the three pieces expand both in forces deployed and in duration. At the same time the initial associations with 'moonlight, tombstones, crypts' open up to embrace a duality of bleak forests and pale moonlight, and finally a more abstract 'slowly progressing symphonic development' in the form of a 25-minute *Adagio*.

All three works are strikingly sepulchral; but one thing that emerges from continuous listening is the progressive musicalisation of material that starts as almost inchoate sound but ends up transfigured into something, in the composer's own words, 'classically

polyphonic', without losing its fundamental identity. The disc may not be the most generously filled but 50 minutes of Ruders is to my mind worth 100 of most of his peers, and handsomely repays repeated hearings. Excellent performances and recordings virtually go without saying, though they shouldn't. **David Fanning**

Schubert

Symphonies – No 2, D125^a; No 6, D589^b

Basle Symphony Orchestra /
Dennis Russell Davies

Sinfonieorchester Basel © SOB07 (59' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Stadtcasino, Basle,

^aAugust 28 & 29, ^bNovember 12-14, 2013



Having recorded the complete symphonies of both Haydn (Sony) and Bruckner (Arte

Nova), Dennis Russell Davies is well placed to tackle the particularities of Schubert's intermediary idiom. The inner movements of the Second present just such a Janus-faced approach in microcosm. A pretty *Andante* tune gains warmth and grace with each added voice and every succeeding

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variation; the journey through major and minor, before hard-won quietude in the major, is one Haydn had taken with the *Andante* of the *Drumroll* Symphony.

The Basle orchestra make neat play with *legato* and *staccato* articulations from wind and strings respectively but Davies finds little more than clockwork charm. Down the road in Zurich, David Zinman's Tonhalle players use more pointed accents and lift the dotted rhythms. He brings real menace and not merely repetition to the Minuet's stamping gait. Perhaps the Tonhalle band is smaller than the Basle string complement of 12.10.8.6.4; it's certainly more agile. Davies forswears both the ornamentation that Zinman reasonably sees as Schubert's Haydnesque inheritance, and the second-half repeat which turns the first movement into a labyrinthine tarantella.

The stakes are higher in the Sixth, and the difference between interpretations still more pronounced. In this neat, polished and pretty inconsequential performance it's easy to hear why Schubert would offer the Ninth to his publisher as his first symphony, passing over Nos 1-6 as teenage essays and thereby permitting everyone else to do likewise. The previous two volumes in the series (covering Symphonies Nos 3, 5 and 9) do not burst with the verve and imagination that would suggest this disc to be an aberration.

Peter Quantrell

Sym No 2 – selected comparison:

Zurich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman

(7/12) (RCA) 88697 87147-2

Sym No 6 – selected comparison:

Zurich Tonhalle Orch, Zinman

(3/13) (RCA) 88725 46336-2

R Strauss

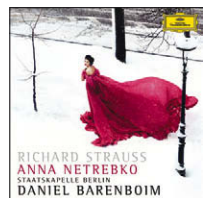
Ein Heldenleben, Op 40. Vier letzte Lieder^a

^aAnna Netrebko *sop*

Staatskapelle Berlin / Daniel Barenboim

DG © 479 3964GH (68' • DDD • T/T)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Berlin, August 2014



Anna Netrebko gets star billing here together with a front-cover photo of her walking along a snow-strewn path and swathed in a billowing red dress. But the main work is Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*. Netrebko sings the *Four Last Songs*, which, it must be admitted, is one of the prime reasons why music lovers will be drawn to this disc. She radiates a gorgeous tone, beautifully calibrated in mood and

inflection, floating divinely in 'Beim Schlafengehen' and powerful in conveying the nub and the modulations of the poetic images throughout the cycle. The performance has the added asset of featuring the mellow timbres of the Berlin Staatskapelle, with Daniel Barenboim thoroughly at one in finding the music's natural contours and the significant points of instrumental detail.

This performance was recorded at a concert in the Berlin Philharmonie last August, in which Barenboim also conducted *Ein Heldenleben*. You can actually hear him conducting right at the start of *Ein Heldenleben* when he emits some audible, effortful groans which resurface from time to time. But the effort is worth it: he directs a dramatic but reasoned interpretation, by no means grandstanding or overinflated but following the musical narrative with clear ideas about the states of mind that the score suggests and a coherent plan of how they fit together structurally. Whether in passages of affecting sensibility or those of more theatrical mien, the Staatskapelle, associated with Strauss ever since the composer himself conducted the orchestra in the early 20th century, play superbly. **Geoffrey Norris**

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring – orchestral version^a;

version for piano four hands^b

^bMaki Namekawa *pf* ^aBasle Symphony

Orchestra / Dennis Russell Davies *bpf*

Sinfonieorchester Basel © SOBO6 (73' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at the Stadtcasino, Basle, October 28-30, 2013



Dennis Russell Davies doesn't give us fast-lane Stravinsky. The Introduction to 'The Adoration of the Earth' approximates a slowly evolving undergrowth, 'The Augurs of Spring' stamping lustily, the waking action helped by transparent sound, woodwinds and big drums coming off particularly well. A pity that the individual episodes aren't separately tracked but this isn't the sort of performance you're likely to give up on then return to, or sample. It draws you in for the duration. The 'Games of the Rival Tribes', 'Procession of the Wise Elder' and, most especially, 'Dance of the Earth' benefit from being patiently enough paced for every detail to register, whether as part of the overall fray or in the way individual phrases are articulated. In the Introduction to 'The Sacrifice', kept

deathly quiet for much of the time, the debt to Debussy seems doubly apparent. Again, once the heat is on, the well-judged pacing keeps it on without flagging (or over-heating), save for the 'Ritual of the Ancestors', which is actually swifter than on many other versions. Rhythmic contours are clearly traced for the closing 'Sacrificial Dance'.

Davies seems acutely aware of *The Rite's* harmonic language and nowhere is this more obvious than at the end of the work, not in its orchestral guise but in the very pianistic piano duo version (a close relation to the solo version that Stravinsky will have used to demonstrate the piece to friends), where the partnership with Maki Namekawa works particularly well. Try the close of the 'Sacrificial Dance', from 16'31", where, if you didn't know what music you were listening to, you might not even recognise it. The rhythmic shape is familiar but its freshly exposed harmonies aren't. Fascinating...and, what's more important, utterly new.

Rob Cowan

Tüür

Symphony No 5^a. Prophecy^b

^aNguyen Lê *elec gtr* ^bMika Väyrynen *acco*

^aUMO Jazz Orchestra;

Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra / Olari Ekt

Online © ODE1234-2 (60' • DDD)



Faced with the unusual commission for a large-scale symphonic work for orchestra and

big band, Estonia's leading symphonist decided to make things even more challenging by adding 'improvisational layers' for rock guitarist. Given his own roots as a rock musician, this was anything but an opportunistic gambit, and the unlikely mix generates the kinds of tensions – large-scale as well as on the surface – of which fine symphonies are made. This one lasts close on 40 minutes and shadows the traditional four-movement design, not out of laziness but clearly because that's what the material itself demands. The sonic components meet on the level of elementalised sound-blocks and motivic shapes, go their separate ways, clash and congeal, in ways that range from the fascinating to the downright spellbinding.

The 20-minute *Prophecy* for accordion and orchestra is another fine display of harmony and texture melted down to a malleable substance all the composer's own. Whether the title itself is necessary, I'm not so sure. The piece was conceived as

a concerto, and while exhibitionism is clearly subordinate to more serious aims, a concerto is still what it feels like.

Comparisons with Nørgård and Aho are probably beside the point, except to say that if they are your idea of first-rate contemporary symphonists and concerto-writers – as they are mine – you're likely to find Tüür worthy of their company. And of course if you already know Tüür, this new disc, superbly performed, recorded and annotated as it is, will be self-recommending in any case. Ondine does not claim the Symphony as a premiere recording but I'm not aware of any rival; nor does the composer's website list one.

David Fanning

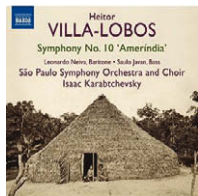
Villa-Lobos

Symphony No 1, 'Ameríndia'

Leonardo Neiva *bar* Saulo Javan *bass*

São Paulo Symphony Choir and Orchestra / Isaac Karabtchevsky

Naxos ® 8 573243 (61' • DDD • T/t)



This is the fourth recording of Villa-Lobos's enormous, magnificent,

overblown, genre-melding Tenth Symphony (1952) I know of (those by Gisele Ben-Dor on Koch – 6/01 – and Victor Pablo Pérez on Harmonia Mundi – 1/04 – are no longer available) and it is the best. The orchestral playing is superb but the symphony stands or falls on the quality of the singing of the trilingual text.

The use of solo singers is curiously varied between recordings: Carl St Clair used solo tenor, baritone and bass, while here Karabtchevsky opts to have the tenor role sung by the choir; Ben-Dor even used a mezzo-soprano. I rather like Karabtchevsky's solution, varying the vocal-choral palette still more, with gradations of soli, tenor section and full choir. St Clair's German choirs surpassed his now unavailable predecessors in Santa Barbara and Tenerife in refinement and control but, unsurprisingly, the Brazilian choir in this new recording are audibly more comfortable with the language, and they make the text and Villa-Lobos's vocal writing spring off the page in ways that eluded the choirs in Stuttgart.

And there's the rub. For all the polish and élan of the Stuttgart recording (still the most satisfactory in sonic terms), and its advance over earlier efforts, as a performance it does not quite catch fire in the manner Karabtchevsky's does. His feel for Villa-Lobos's idiom, orchestral sound

and expressive world is near unmatched, with only Minczuk and Neschling rivalling him, but they have not essayed the symphonies on disc. This new Tenth is the most convincing account yet, caught splendidly by Naxos in fine sound. Recommended with enthusiasm to all those interested in Villa-Lobos – and those who aren't. **Guy Rickards**

Comparative version:

SW German RSO, *St Clair* (6/08) (CPO) CPO999 786-2

Walton • Britten • Elgar

Britten *Four Sea Interludes* from Peter Grimes, Op 33a **Elgar** Cello Concerto, Op 85^a **Walton** Cello Concerto^a

^aLi-Wei Qin *vc*

London Philharmonic Orchestra / Zhang Yi

ABC Classics ® ABC481 1243 (75' • DDD)

Walton • Hindemith

Hindemith Cello Concerto^a. Solo Cello Sonata, Op 25 No 3 **Walton** Cello Concerto^a. *Passacaglia*

Christian Poltéra *vc*

^aSão Paulo Symphony Orchestra / Frank Shipway

BIS ® BIS2077 (70' • DDD/DSD)



Here are two distinguished new versions of Walton's still underestimated Cello Concerto. Both display heaps of eloquence and perceptive artistry from all involved, are utterly valid in their differing approaches and complement each other beautifully. Editorially, too, they stand apart: in the finale Li-Wei Qin opts for the revised coda that Walton fashioned in 1975 following a request for a 'less melancholic ending' from the work's legendary dedicatee, Gregor Piatigorsky. Does it improve on the published original? I don't think so, but decide for yourselves. Backed to the hilt by a meticulously prepared LPO under Zhang Yi, the Chinese virtuoso manifestly loves this bewitching music and savours to the max its soaring lyricism, fastidious refinement and wistful tenderness. By comparison, Zurich-born Christian Poltéra is marginally leaner in tone and less inclined to linger; his is a refreshing, purposeful view which pays handsome dividends in tightening the structural bolts of the finale's alluringly wayward theme and improvisations. Fabulously secure in technique, the commanding Poltéra also benefits from wholly sympathetic, razor-sharp support from the São Paulo SO under the late Frank Shipway, while the sound is

splendidly realistic, even by BIS's customarily high standards.

As for the couplings, Poltéra's choice of Walton's solo *Passacaglia* (written in 1979-80 for Rostropovich) and two substantial works by Paul Hindemith is a particularly happy one. Hindemith was, of course, the soloist in the October 1929 world premiere of Walton's masterly Viola Concerto, and the two composers remained firm friends right up to Hindemith's death in 1963. His strongly communicative Cello Concerto of 1940 (whose slow movement provided Walton with the theme for his orchestral *Variations on a Theme of Hindemith*) was also written for Piatigorsky and receives magnificently assured and hugely dedicated advocacy here, as does the pithy Solo Sonata from 1922-23 (try its songful *Langsam* centrepiece). Turning to the excellently engineered ABC Classics release, there's lots to admire, too, in Qin's questing, nobly intense interpretation of the Elgar Concerto – he's a superbly stylish, raptly intuitive performer of whom I'm sure we'll be hearing plenty more. Yi proves a conspicuously tasteful partner, and his shrewdly observant account of Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* – which features some notably accomplished orchestral playing (marvellous work from the LPO's Principal Flute in 'Sunday Morning') allied to a vivid sense of atmosphere – makes a generous bonus on what is a thoroughly recommendable issue. Acquire one or the other – ideally both!

Andrew Achenbach

'The Argentinian Album'

Ginastera Concerto for String Orchestra, Op 33 **Golijov** Last Round **Piazzolla** Cuatro Estaciones *Porteñas* (arr Desyatnikov)

Amsterdam Sinfonietta / Candida Thompson *vn*

Channel Classics ® CCSSA33014

(65' • DDD/DSD)



Piazzolla must be the most-arranged composer of recent times, a tribute to his compositions' inherent strength as much as to their popularity. Leonid Desyatnikov's reworking (1996-98) of the *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* – one of the Argentinian's most delicious combinations of Tango Nuevo with Classical convention – is technically adroit but very intrusive, altering each piece's structure and incorporating, however tongue-in-cheek, quotations from Vivaldi and, in 'Winter', Pachelbel's ubiquitous Canon. These



One to watch: Chinese-Australian cellist Li-Wei Qin records Walton's Cello Concerto with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Zhang Yi

change the expressive content in a fundamental way, not necessarily for the better. Nonetheless, Candida Thompson dispatches the solo part with commendable swing, leading the ensemble with aplomb.

The main event here, undeniably, is Ginastera's Concerto for strings, a tremendously invigorating work reflecting many of its composer's stylistic and expressive concerns. Opening quietly, with a sequence of instrumental solos from the section leaders, it builds through the succeeding movements to a hell-for-leather finale of Bartókian vitality. The Amsterdam Sinfonietta's account is splendidly prepared and executed, worthy of comparison with that of I Musici di Montréal which so impressed Lionel Salter. The Canadians are a touch fleeter than their Dutch rivals but there is little to choose between the rival versions: Channel Classics' sound is clear if slightly clinical compared to the warmer atmosphere on Chandos.

Couplings may then be the primary differential and, for those wanting the Desyatnikov arrangement and Golijov's Piazzolla tribute *Last Round* (1991, orch 1997), the newcomer will be self-recommending. Chandos paired the Ginastera with Villa-Lobos and arrangements by Evangelista. On balance,

the Chandos remains marginally preferable but the new disc is highly recommendable in its own right. **Guy Rickards**

Ginastera – comparative version:

I Musici di Montréal, Turovsky

(5/96) (CHAN) CHAN9434

'Prayer'

Bloch *From Jewish Life*^a. Baal Shem - Nigun^a.

Méditation hébraïque^a. Schelomo^b **Casals**

El cant dels ocells (The Song of the Birds)^c

Shostakovich *From Jewish Folk Poetry* – excs^a

^a**Amsterdam Sinfonietta / Candida Thomson;**

^b**Lyons National Orchestra / Leonard Slatkin;**

^c**Cello Ensemble Amsterdam Sinfonietta**

Sony Classical © 88883 76217-2 (60' • DDD)



familiarity and identification with the piece (the first of Bloch's suite *From Jewish Life*), as she has often used it as an encore at concerts and has found that many people in her audiences were moved by it. 'This is music – like the rest of the programme,' she says, 'that is both sensual and reflective, and the feelings that Bloch's music

expresses are universal and know no boundaries between cultures and countries. What I see and hear is the mysterious, ardent, turbulent Jewish soul.'

She opens her recorded concert with *From Jewish Life*, played with great depth of feeling. Then follows *Nigun* ('Improvisation'), another traditional Jewish religious melody, and again full of ardour. The *Méditation hébraïque* was written in 1924 and dedicated to Casals. It is introspective and thoughtful. But the most famous and familiar of Bloch's compositions is the 'rapsodie hébraïque' *Schelomo*, heard here in a dedicated and powerful American performance directed by Leonard Slatkin, with great virtuosity demanded from both soloist and orchestra, as well as emotional intensity. Additionally, four excerpts are included from Shostakovich's song-cycle *From Jewish Folk Poetry*, which describes traditional Jewish life in tsarist Russia. Finally we have the familiar Catalan *Song of the Birds*, written with great personal feeling by Pablo Casals and played here with unforgettable lyrical intensity. The totally natural recording balance adds to the presence of the performers and this well-packaged and informative CD is well worth having. **Ivan March**

Nielsen's Symphony No 5

Alan Gilbert discusses the intricacies of the newest addition to his Nielsen cycle with **Andrew Mellor**

There's a neat little story about Nielsen's Fifth Symphony. In 1927, Wilhelm Furtwängler was in Frankfurt conducting one of the first performances of the piece outside Denmark. Nielsen had been invited along to the rehearsals with a friend. During one of the most fiendishly difficult string passages – we don't know which one, but you wouldn't bet against the characteristic passage of enforced chaos Nielsen conjures at figure 20 in the *Presto* section of the second movement – Furtwängler stopped the orchestra and took the string section apart, tidying up each line before putting it back together and running the passage again, *tutti*. Nielsen, according to folklore, turned to his friend in the stalls and complained that he 'preferred it how it was before'.

You can read a few things into Nielsen's comment, over and above the fact that he liked a gag. Nielsen absolutely wanted his music to sound alive with risk and discourtesy, which poses something of a conundrum as we prepare to welcome copious 'anniversary' recordings of his works into an age when precision and clarity reign supreme. 'I was certainly trying to unsmooth the edges a lot of the time as this orchestra can sound plush and luxurious' says Alan Gilbert of his New York Philharmonic as we look over the score for the Fifth Symphony in his study at Avery Fisher Hall in between live concert recordings of the piece. 'I guess they now know that there should be a slightly unhinged, chaotic feel even when they're scrupulously playing their parts.'

One passage that certainly wouldn't have been the subject of the Furtwängler/Nielsen anecdote is the work's sparse, pregnant opening – a sequence that needs scrupulousness more than almost any other in the symphony. The two-note *ostinato* in the violas continues (with the odd break or sudden flourish) for 67 bars – soil from which the wind themes, delicate and ominous, emerge like flowering weeds. 'This kind of music is difficult because it's extremely simple,' says Gilbert. 'It's like high-wire walking...the perfection of these simple, isolated lines. Maintaining concentration is really hard. But it's a wonderful opening. It doesn't reveal a lot but it promises a lot.'

What it promises – either from the minor-third interval of that *ostinato* or from the copious warning signals (to borrow David Fanning's phrase) that are scattered throughout the first 260 bars of the piece: the snare drum's guarded plotting, the clarinet's deranged fear, the celesta's chilling smile – is trouble; 'evil lurking' in Gilbert's words. Even when the



Challenging: for Alan Gilbert, conducting Nielsen's Fifth is 'like high-wire walking'

clouds appear to part, and the first movement's major-key *Adagio* passage is ushered in by the most innocent of gestures on a pastoral oboe, we're not safe. 'It's so beautiful and so lush and so warm,' says Gilbert, 'but it's like hoping for something rather than having actually achieved it. And there's actually something slightly cancerous about it.'

This deceptively warm music incubates the cancer. Then, in bar 324, it springs into the foreground: two flutes suddenly become possessed by that niggling motif from earlier that frets on adjacent notes. Soon it starts to infect the whole orchestra, leading to one of the most extraordinary confrontations in the 20th-century symphony – Nielsen instructing a snare drum to 'improvise freely with all possible fantasy' against the ensemble surging upwards in front of it. In addition to that 'editorialised' direction in the score, interpreters should know how Nielsen described the snare drum solo in a private letter. The drummer 'must at all costs disturb the music' wrote Nielsen to Furtwängler. 'He must be absolutely absorbed in wanting to ruin the singing in the orchestra...with whatever he can think of.'



The historical view

Carl Nielsen

Interview in the Danish daily newspaper *'Politiken'*, January 1922

'I know that it isn't easy to grasp...or to play. Some people have even thought that now Arnold Schoenberg can pack his bags and take a walk with his disharmonies – mine were worse. I don't think so.'

August Felsing

Writing in the journal *'Musik'*, February 1922

'Intellectual art is what the second part [of the Fifth Symphony] is, and it is a master who speaks. But the pact with the eternal art which shines forth in the first part is broken here.'

Robert Simpson

Description of the first movement in a booklet-note for Kletzki's Decca disc, 1971

'Shadowy shapes begin to form; they are unclear and create problems, as if seen by a dawning consciousness unable yet to recognise objects and finding them vaguely frightening.'

One of this symphony's perennial problems in performance is that we hardly ever get drumming that approaches this sentiment. At least, that's what *I* think, and it's a relief to hear that Gilbert feels the same. 'I talked about it with the engineers and we agreed that there's no recording where the drum goes crazy enough, so we decided to make this the one,' he says with a 'Nielsenite' look of mischief. It's a mischief I hear fully embraced in performance by Christopher Lamb, Principal Percussionist of the New York Philharmonic. 'I thought it was good – really strong' says Gilbert. 'He plays with a huge sound that's actually unpleasant to hear – as it should be.'

The snare drum altercation stands with the timpani duel of the Fourth Symphony and the waltz breakout of the Third as one of those iconic moments in Nielsen – a physical and sonic representation of his obsession with conflict (and, for Nielsen scholar Daniel Grimley, even more: a conscious re-energising of 'the symphony' and its value in 20th-century musical discourse). 'It's a fierce, evil force that's trying to vanquish the side of good,' says Gilbert of the passage. 'I mean, that's a very simplistic way of looking at it, but I think that's what it's about – the tension between hope, peace and warmth, and something that's just bad. Something that ultimately is vanquished.'

'The first-movement Adagio is like hoping for something rather than having actually achieved it – there's something slightly cancerous about it' – Alan Gilbert

But is it? That remains typically ambiguous. Not only at the end of the symphony's first movement – that deranged clarinet, the first to crack, gets the movement's last word: a desolate, wound-licking cadenza taunted still by the now off-stage snare drum – but also at the end of the tumbling, downhill second movement and the symphony itself, where Nielsen, ever the anti-Romantic, refuses to place a symphonic full-stop in the central European tradition (and not for the first time). 'Yeah, it's certainly not Mahler!' says Gilbert looking at the final pages of the score. 'It's a funny ending, rather abrupt, like there's another chapter in the book. We've been playing this E flat major for so long – and I mean, how did we even get to E flat major? – but even though it's glorious it doesn't feel like home because it's a different key from the beginning of the piece. It feels like, even after you finish, there's still another breath to take.' There's a good argument that the Sixth Symphony is that next breath; not so much an unfathomable riddle as a clear continuation, the nature music of the Fifth viewed under a more powerful microscope.

But the 'unfinished business' of the Fifth has wider implications for the world just as the snare drum does, according to Grimley, for the symphony as a genre. 'I do think it's a very contemporary story,' says Gilbert. 'It tells you something about the world we're living in today, when challenges and evil rear their ugly heads in unexpected ways. If the end of the snare drum was a total victory, then we'd be at the end of the symphony, but there's still the second movement to go. How timely is that? We think we're going to have resolution and peace and accord, yet somehow there's still something to fight with – always.'

Nielsen's Symphony No 5 will be reviewed in a future issue

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS LEE, THE TULLY POTTER COLLECTION

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Pwyll ap Siôn listens to a sonic road trip for violin and piano: *'Molard's urgent, edgy violin ensures there's no let-up until we arrive at a final, suspended harmonic'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



David Patrick Stearns on a 'reduced' Sheherazade: *'Somewhere up there, Leopold Stokowski, who made this music a big-orchestra showpiece, is having a fit'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**

Bartók

String Quartets - No 1, Op 7 Sz40; No 5, Sz102

Meta4

Hänssler Classic © CD98 036 (62' • DDD)



Meta4 connect well with Bartók's sense of humour. Take the meaningful *glissandos*

from 3'43" into the fifth movement of the Fifth Quartet, the way they deal with pauses...really makes you smile. Elsewhere, although one feels the intentions are right, execution is too often fuzzy and what should sound rhythmically secure doesn't. At around 3'21" into the Fifth's first movement there's a momentary slip (a nasty edit perhaps?) that would drive me bonkers on repetition; and a slight sense of being fazed leads to discomfort, the last thing you want in works where ensemble needs to be as tight as a drum. The mirror-image *Adagio molto* second movement and *Andante* fourth are better done but in the jazzy *Scherzo* that falls between them inbuilt rhythmic ambiguities sound more 'ambiguous' than they should.

The more Romantic First Quartet is lovingly indulged, occasionally with cossetting *portamentos*, certainly in the first movement; and while elsewhere tempi are well chosen and there is some nicely judged playing, the quartet's closing pages seem to take an age to make an exit. The overall impression, performance-wise (and I mean this with a maximum of respect, even encouragement), is of works in progress. Given an extra year or two, with bolts tightened and better-focused interpretative ideas, I think Meta4 would elevate their view of Bartók to another plane. But as things stand, there's no viable contest with the Hagens, Juilliards (three times recorded), Véghs (twice), Takács (twice), Lindsays, Emersons or Alban Bergs.

Rob Cowan

Brahms • Schubert

Brahms Piano Trio No 3, Op 101

Schubert Piano Trio No 2, D929

Sitkovetsky Trio

Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0070 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live, September 19, 2013



An impressive opening to Brahms's Trio, *Allegro energico* as specified. Instrumental

balance too is just. But Wu Qian tends to over-pedal the strenuous piano line, and mildly congested sound in this movement further diminishes clarity. The finale, cohesively held together, is of similar standard. Unsuitable tempi, however, compromise the two middle movements. The second is certainly *Presto* but the qualification *non assai* is ignored; and the music is hurried. Conversely, the third is too slow for *Andante grazioso*, more turgid than gracious. Eugene Istomin, Isaac Stern and Leonard Rose or Julius Katchen, Josef Suk and János Starker are far better attuned to the work as an entity.

Wu as *primus inter pares* often rises to the occasion in Brahms but doesn't measure up to the bewildering kaleidoscope of power, poetry and turbulence that characterises Schubert. Her playing, though technically practised, is exact and of a remorseless determination that her partners mostly follow. The potential for recreative imagination is largely lost on them. Wu's *staccato* in the slow movement, taken at a pace more akin to *allegretto* than *Andante con moto*, is metrical and monotonous, evading a responsibility for prising out the darker, ambivalent regions of the music, for sensing unwritten inflections and nuances. András Schiff, Yuuko Shiokawa and Miklós Perényi offer much of what's missing (like the Sitkovetsky, they too play the original version of the finale), while Mieczysław Horszowski, Alexander Schneider and Pablo Casals deliver a very searching exposé. **Nalen Anthoni**

Brahms - selected comparisons:

Istomin, Stern, Rose

(1/68^r, 5/91^r) (SONY) 88843 06136-2

Katchen, Suk, Starker

(5/69^r, 6/97) (DECC) 448 092-2DF2

Schubert - selected comparisons:

Schiff, Shiokawa, Perényi (12/97^r) (WARN) 2564 69967-5

Horszowski, Schneider, Casals

(9/54^r, 5/94) (SONY) SMK58988

Bresnick

Going Home - Vysoke, My Jerusalem^a.

Ishi's Song^b. Josephine the Singer^c. Strange

Devotion^b. A Message from the Emperor^d.

Prayers Remain Forever^e

^cSarita Kwok *vn* ^bLisa Moore *pf* ^dMichael

Compitello, ^eIan Rosenbaum *vib/mari/spkrs*

^aDouble Entendre, ^eTwoSense

Starkland © ST221 (61' • DDD)



Martin Bresnick's reputation as one of America's most prominent

composition teachers sometimes overshadows his own very considerable creative gifts and wide-ranging body of work. Although each of this disc's works is inspired by personal stories and literature, their purely musical narrative trajectories speak eloquently and powerfully for themselves.

The opening piece, *Going Home - Vysoke, My Jerusalem*, largely consists of slow-moving interplay between violin, viola, cello and oboe that achieves a haunting ebb and flow between aching intensity and wistfulness. *Ishi's Song*, for singing pianist, takes its cue from a song sung by the last surviving Yahi Native American and is both powerfully and sensitively performed by Lisa Moore. The music's rhythmic hocketing and primarily pentatonic arrangement evoke traditional Gamelan sonorities along with a more pliable, less rigid take on the 'written-out rock'n'roll' post-minimal aesthetic adopted by some of Bresnick's more prominent students. However, another solo piano piece, *Strange Devotion*, digs even deeper and reveals Bresnick's complex yet controlled harmonic language and assiduously building keyboard

textures operating at full expressive capacity. *Josephine the Singer* for solo violin begins with striking high harmonics (gorgeously executed by Sarita Kwok) that soon settle into passages in double-stops and arpeggios which Janáček might have recognised as his own. *A Message from the Emperor* is a Kafka story set for vibraphone, marimba and narrators. While Bresnick deploys both instruments imaginatively in regard to varied mallet strokes and myriad wood/metal combinations, the one-dimensional, automaton quality of the narration leaves something to be desired.

No qualms at all, though, about the dark, brooding and emotionally substantial *Prayers Remain Forever*. Moore and cellist Ashley Bathgate give as much colour and meaning to the impassioned virtuoso outbursts in the final pages as they do to the central section's rapid, subtly shifting arpeggios and the long-lined introduction. In addition to Bresnick's programme annotations, his former student David Lang contributes a heartfelt opening essay. Highly recommended. **Jed Distler**

Chopin

Cello Sonata, Op 65. Piano Trio, Op 8^a

^aKolja Blacker *vn* Johannes Moser *vc*

Ewa Kupiec *pf*

Hänssler Classic (F) CD93 321 (58' • DDD)



I find it odd that, with two works in which the piano takes the lead, it's Johannes

Moser whose photo adorns the CD's cover and whose biography is more prominently featured. That said, this is an excellently balanced recording, with performances that are persuasive and convincing. In the Sonata, Kupiec and Moser relate perfectly to each other, following one another's *rubato* seemingly spontaneously. Kupiec has a fluid way with Chopin, keeping the music flowing easily, without rigidity, and Moser's warm, malleable tone is an ideal vehicle for the lovely lyrical lines. A fine example is the *Scherzo's* Trio; he and Kupiec explore all its harmonic subtleties without destroying the overall momentum. The *Scherzo* and finale have, perhaps, an unusually serious air, relating them more firmly to the passionate first movement. For me the Sonata's touchstone recording is the 1981 Argerich/Rostropovich account; the mercurial quality of their playing allows the many expressive details to emerge more vividly. But this does not invalidate the more sober yet still vital approach of Moser and Kupiec.

The Trio, too, sounds fluent and beautifully integrated; the first movement's *con fuoco* character is particularly well captured. The many extended passages of piano figuration flow effortlessly; on another fine recent recording, by the Trio Chausson, which generally favours slightly slower tempi, these passages, by taking their time, often introduce more expressive variety. The Chausson recording tends to favour the piano; a natural balance, perhaps, but I'd prefer the more equal weight given to the three instruments by Hänssler. All in all, these are highly recommendable performances. **Duncan Druce**

Vc Son – selected comparison:

Argerich, Rostropovich (2/81st) (DG) 419 860-2GGA

Pf Trio – selected comparison:

Trio Chausson (MIRA) MIR089

Corelli

'La follia'

Sonatas, Op 5 - Nos 7-12

Michala Petri *rec* Mahan Esfahani *hpd*

OUR Recordings (F) 6 220610 (66' • DDD)



It's rare to experience the level of artistic rapport heard on this recording from the

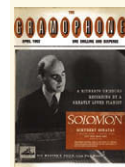
Danish recorder player Michala Petri and Iranian-born harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani. Corelli's Op 5 provides the framework for a remarkable demonstration of not only the rich, idiomatic possibilities for transcription from violin to recorder but, significantly, the extraordinary levels of dialogue (trs 1 and 15) and genuine inspiration of the moment it inspires.

In Petri's capable hands, the recorder becomes a medium through which she conveys a more vocal interpretation of thematic material than ever a violin could. From Corelli's logical, elegant bass-lines, Esfahani crafts the most imaginative and engaging accompaniments and repartee I have ever heard, each phrase, section and movement a skilful and stylish response (trs 1 and 14), to which he brings an astonishing range of techniques (trs 8 and 9) and instrumental colour (trs 13, 17 and 19). The musical chemistry between the two musicians is palpable and most evident in the quick exchanges in the faster movements (trs 5, 9, 11 and 20). While there are moments of both sublime simplicity and compelling declamation (tr 12), equally there is joyfulness and banter. Together, Petri and Esfahani take the application of ornamentation to new levels of sophistication (trs 2, 3 and 16), exploring the implications of the music

GRAMOPHONE Archive

Bartók's Fifth Quartet

Three recordings that came before Meta4's and how Gramophone rated them



APRIL 1962

Bartók String Quartet No 5

Fine Arts Quartet

Saga (F) XIP7003 (12in • 29s 6d)

For Nos 5 and 6 I now think this new version by the Fine

Arts Quartet the best of all, with its wide range of dynamics and its feeling of having the players in the room, but not only two feet away from one's ears. I like the natural, unaffected approach of these Americans to the music; they are sensitive and subtle, but never precious – just a shade less 'artful', I think, than the Végh or the Juilliard, but not less artistic.

Andrew Porter



DECEMBER 1984

Bartók String Quartets

Takács Quartet

Hungaroton (F) (F) SLPD12502/4

(three records, nas)

The Takács Quartet was

formed in 1975 when its members were still students. These LPs make clear that at their best they are indeed very good; but that 'best' is not present with sufficient consistency to raise them above most of their competitors. The Takács Quartet can display an impressive technique, and they attack the finale of the Fifth at breakneck speed, but I find the results more hectic than exciting. At the other extreme, when really sustained expressiveness is required, the effect is often far too neutral.

Arnold Whittall



JULY 2007

Bartók String Quartet No 5, Sz102

Zehetmair Qt

ECM (F) 476 5779 (51' • DDD)

A few seconds into the

first movement of this

extraordinary version of the Fifth Quartet I was already double-checking whether the dynamics were being played as written. Many weren't. The Zehetmairs career around the notes like bikers on a zig-zag course, tracing arches at speed with what sounds like the least effort. It'll take some getting used to but I recommend you persevere. There's savagery too – for example where Bartók asks the leader to play *ff stridente* and Zehetmair all but saws through his fiddle.

Rob Cowan

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DUTTON EPOCH NEW RELEASE

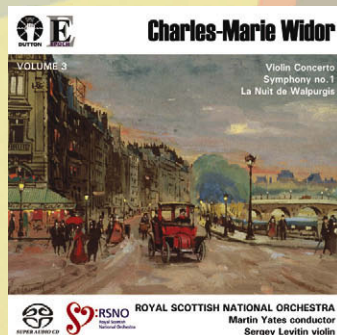
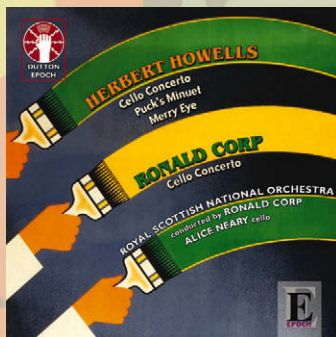
Epoch INTERNATIONAL SERIES



Walter Braunfels VOLUME 2 CDLX 7316

Symphonic Variations on a French Children's Song
Sinfonia Brevis
Suite from Der Gläserne Berg
BBC Concert Orchestra
Johannes Wildner
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Walter Braunfels, who died in 1954, was one of the great twentieth-century German composers who were temporarily eclipsed by the Nazi era and the 1950s *avant-garde*. This second volume in Dutton Epoch's survey of Braunfels' memorable orchestral music spans from his luxuriant early *Symphonic Variations on a French Children's Song* to the utterly delightful orchestral suite *The Glass Mountain (Der Gläserne Berg)* and the powerfully satisfying *Sinfonia Brevis*.



Charles-Marie Widor VOLUME 3 CDLX 7315

La Nuit de Walpurgis – Symphonic Poem
Violin Concerto
Symphony No.1
Sergey Levitin (violin)
Royal Scottish National Orchestra
Martin Yates
SUPER AUDIO CD
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

The third volume in Dutton Epoch's exploration of Widor's orchestral music will delight and surprise in equal measure. Conductor Martin Yates writes: "The recordings of the orchestral works of Widor came about simply because I could not believe that the composer who we all knew through his Organ Symphonies had written nothing else of value. I soon discovered there was a considerable amount of orchestral music and that some of it, *La Nuit de Walpurgis* for instance, had been celebrated during Widor's lifetime." In addition to that evocative and gripping score, here we feature the delightful First Symphony and the unknown Violin Concerto, the latter in a superb performance by the brilliant Russian soloist Sergey Levitin.

**CDLX 7317
HERBERT HOWELLS**
Cello Concerto
Puck's Minuet
Merry Eye
RONALD CORP
Cello Concerto
Alice Neary (cello)
ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
Ronald Corp
INCLUDES WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS



Charles Loeffler CDLX 7313

Divertissement Espagnol
for saxophone and orchestra
La Villanelle du Diable
Une Nuit de Mai
[No.2 from *Veillees de l'Ukraine*]
for violin and orchestra
Divertissement in A minor
for violin and orchestra
Lorraine McAslan (violin)
Amy Dickson (saxophone)
BBC Concert Orchestra
Johannes Wildner
WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

Charles Martin Loeffler was a significant American composer of the generation who came into prominence before the First World War. In this pioneering programme of first recordings, distinguished soloists and the BBC Concert Orchestra explore the music Loeffler wrote soon after he became an American citizen in the 1880s and joined the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Soloist Lorraine McAslan brilliantly rises to the music's very considerable technical demands, velvet-toned in the *Une Nuit de Mai*, a sumptuous musical picture of a spring night in the Ukraine. In the extended *Divertissement in A minor* – effectively a three-movement violin concerto – McAslan throws off Loeffler's virtuosic passagework with aplomb and his romantic tunes with gorgeous tone. Prizewinning soloist Amy Dickson delights with the compact *Divertissement Espagnol* for saxophone and orchestra. The programme is completed with the vivid symphonic fantasy *La Villanelle du Diable (The Devil's Round)*.

Epoch BRITISH MUSIC



MALCOLM ARNOLD CDLX 7318

Symphony No.7
Philharmonic Concerto
Fantasy on a Theme of John Field
Peter Donohoe (piano)
ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
Martin Yates
SUPER AUDIO CD



HAVERGAL BRIAN CDLX 7314

Festal Dance
Symphony No.5 "Wine of Summer"
Symphony No.19
Symphony No.27
Roderick Williams (baritone)
ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
Martyn Brabbins
SUPER AUDIO CD
INCLUDES WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

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itself, commenting and reflecting on it by the way they choose to embellish repeats and points of imitation.

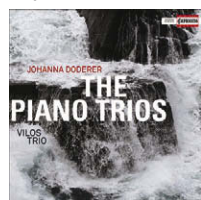
This is a recording that will repay repeated listening as a masterclass in musical collaboration. It breaks new and higher ground. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Doderer

Piano Trios – No 1; No 2; No 3, 'For the Gustav Mahler Jubilee 2010 and 2011'; No 4, 'Morning'

Vilos Trio

Capriccio © C5220 (59' • DDD)



A composition pupil of Beate Furrer with six operas under her belt, Vienna-based

Johanna Doderer (b1969) has some big-name supporters, notably Patricia Kopatchinskaja, to whom she has dedicated a violin concerto. Her style is emotionally explicit, direct and accessible, not noticeably Austrian except in its Mittel-European devotion to the sometimes problematic combination of violin, cello and piano. After grappling with cutting-edge techniques, Doderer seems to have been seduced by Shostakovich and the brand of consonance in vogue on the Baltic fringes of the old Soviet empire. There is no extraneous glitz and little if any knowing irony. Nor has she been afraid to look back to what will sound well in her chosen medium.

Capriccio's non-chronological sequence begins with the Third Piano Trio, possibly the easiest to digest. Commemorating the Mahler jubilee, it contrasts mainstream post-minimalist bustle with cooler elegiac sections inspired by the sentiments of 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen'. Its predecessor, composed for the Haydn year of 2009, put me in mind of Shostakovich at his most foursquare and academic (qv works such as the Piano Quintet). Eventually Doderer pushes into Schnittke-land, thumpiness melting away before a sweetly innocent cadence. The First Trio (2002) is closer still to Shostakovich and yet more relentless in its repetitiousness – some Górecki pieces function in much the same way. The simple/simplistic ending is inconclusive. Things loosen up in the more extended Fourth Trio (2013), where Doderer's late-Romantic models are allowed fuller rein; once again the music stops without resolution.

One or two over-strenuous passages notwithstanding, this is a committed, spontaneous-sounding outing for the Norwegian/Lithuanian Vilos Trio, which

takes its name from the players' home towns (Vilnius and Oslo). All three would appear to be right inside the idiom. I have not heard the rival account of Doderer's Second Trio by the Haydn Trio Eisenstadt (Capriccio, 9/09) but that is presented as part of a multi-composer Haydn-themed commissioning project and hence a rather different proposition. Given the faithful and immediate quality of the sound, this unassuming collection is certainly worth trying. **David Gutman**

Françaix

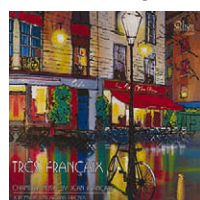
'Très Françaix'

Variations sur un thème plaisant.

Quatuor. Sixtuor. Elégie. L'Heure du Berger

Jeremy Polmear ob and friends

Oboe Classics © CC2029 (59' • DDD)



Jean Françaix's chamber music, whose great charm is difficult to analyse, is

delightfully French, with its wit, lightness of touch, quixotic changing of moods, and blending of colours. It is most sympathetically played here, helped by a believable balance, with each wind group felicitously blended. The concert opens with attractive, typically diverse Variations on a 'pleasing theme', introduced by Diana Ambache on the piano. It is taken up by a chirping first variation on the flutes, with a whiff of a tango, then in Var 2 is passed on to a languorous bassoon, and leads in Var 3 to a brief woodwind-and-piano *scherzo*, before the mellow piano returns and dominates tranquilly when joined by the oboe in Var 4. Var 5 continues the mood poignantly. Var 6 is Gershwin-esque; then the music moves, in Var 7, via the whole ensemble, to a fetching waltz in Var 8 for piano and flutes, and on to the slightly grotesque hurdy-gurdy finale, all but dominated by contrabassoon.

The *Quatuor* is scored for cor anglais, violin, viola and cello, opening frivolously but with the soloist then moving from doleful introspection to rhythmic gaiety, and to melancholy and back. The *Sixtuor* opens in an even more irreverent style, with interplay between three different trios of soloists. The 5/4 *Scherzo* is rhythmically unpredictable; then comes a sample of the composer's individual harmonic style, with a gentle duo between flute and bassoon, joined by an oboe. The *Elégie*, written for the lower instruments, is a haunting commemoration of Mozart. In complete contrast, the infectious *L'Heure du Berger* vividly pictures the chattering of a

restaurant's customers and the staff who scurry to serve them all. Altogether a most infectious and enjoyable collection.

Ivan March

Gourzi

Eine kleine Geschichte. P-ILION: neun Fragmente einer Ewigkeit. Aiolos Wind. Israel. 'noch fürcht' ich'. Vibrato 1. Klavierstücke I-V. Vibrato 2

Lorenda Ramou pf **Ensemble Coriolis**

ECM New Series © 481 0988 (52' • DDD)



Although currently little known in the UK, the Greek composer Konstantia

Gourzi (b1962) is well established in Germany as a conductor and administrator as well as a composer. This disc features a selection from her growing output (56 works to date), focusing on solo piano and string quartet. Among the former, the seven miniatures of 'noch fürcht' ich' (1993) use motivic elaboration and keyboard resonance to striking ends, while the five *Klavierstücke* (2004) afford a miniature cycle of teasing elusiveness. The brief study *Eine kleine Geschichte* (2005) recalls Silvestrov in its limpid rumination, whereas *Aiolos Wind* (2010) pays homage to six composers and musicians in laconically humorous terms.

With its single movement of almost 12 minutes, the string quartet *Israel* (2004) is much the most substantial work – its range of playing techniques allied to a harmonic content such as denotes this composer's interest in combining idioms and instruments of different cultures. Its successor, *P-ILION* (2007), unfolds as 'nine fragments of eternity' whose frequently stark contrasts of texture and expression create a whole that is demonstrably more than the sum of its parts. Piano and string quartet combine in *Vibrato 1* and 2 (2010), their sharing of ideas and quizzical manner suggesting the one as an intriguing paraphrase of the other.

The performances suggest a close familiarity not just with the works in question but with Gourzi's approach overall. Coolly spacious sound and a decent booklet essay round out this absorbing (though short measure) introduction to an eminently worthwhile composer.

Richard Whitehouse

Hume

'Harke, harke! – Lyra Violls Humors & Delights'

A Careles Humor. A Humorous Pavin. A Jigge.

A Souldiers Galliard. A Souldiers Resolution. Alas

Poore Men. An Almaine. Captaine Hume's

Galliard. Fain would I change that note. Good

Again. Hark, Hark. Loves Farewell. Musicke and Mirth. My Mistresse hath a pritty thing. The Lady of Sussex Delight. Sweet Ayre. The Earle of Pembroke's Galiard. The Passion of Musick. The Spirit of Gambo. This Sport is Ended. Tickell. Tickell. Tickle Me Quickly. Touch Me Lightly. Touch Me Sweetely. What Greater Griefe

Guido Balestracci *lyra viol*

Les Basses Réunies / Bruno Cocset *dessus/lyra viol*
Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA197 (71' • DDD)



Time is always well spent in the musical company of Captain Tobias Hume. For the Scottish-born professional soldier-for-hire, music was 'the onely effeminate part of me...alwayes Generous, because never Mercenarie', and the sense that for him it was an escape from the grim realities of the military life is strong in the works he composed for the instrument he himself played and loved, the viol. The variety and invention of the dances, song transcriptions and character pieces he published in the early 1600s suggest a man for whom the viol was a true comfort and companion (did he take it on campaign with him, I wonder). They may not always be the most sophisticated but they have heart, honesty and, for the modern ear, a deeply evocative quality.

Bruno Cocset's group Les Basses Réunies are joined by guest artist Guido Balestracci to perform 25 Hume pieces on combinations ranging from solo viol (Balestracci) to three viols and harpsichord. The viols themselves are carefully chosen; though each is subtly different, the effect of all the bowing, plucking 'lyra-way' (chord-playing), even a harpsichord strung in gut, is of distinct sounds uniting over the course of the programme into what seems like one great all-embracing viol. And what a beautiful instrument that is!

The performances are exemplary, as full of vitality in *The Lady of Sussex Delight*, *A Jigge* and *The Spirit of Gambo* as lyrical depth in *What Greater Griefe* and *Alas Poore Men* or virtuosity in *The Earl of Pembroke his Galiard*. There is a hint of the Celtic here and there, while *A Souldiers Resolution* is admirably fluid through all its battle sounds and shouted descriptions.

The booklet shows the four musicians recording in a tranquil pool of light; how easy it is to imagine Hume among them, escaping the noise of war with his beloved viol. **Lindsay Kemp**

Keeley

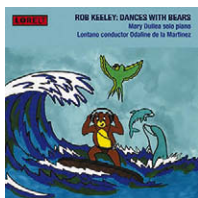
Dances with Bears^a. Quetzalli^a. On the Tiles^b.

Six Inventions^c. Tales from the Golden City^d. Piano Concerto^e

Rowland Sutherland *fl*^c **Andrew Sparling** *cl*

Caroline Balding *vn*^b **Dominic Saunders**,

Mary Dullea *pf*^{ae} **Lontano / Odaline de la Martinez**
Lorelt Ⓢ LNT138 (72' • DDD)



Although Rob Keeley may be known among contemporary

music mavens for his formidable pianistic prowess and championing of new works, he is a serious and skilful composer in his own right, as these six works dating from 1996 to 2011 prove.

Scored for three clarinets, vibraphone and string trio, *Quetzalli*'s chordal blocks recall Messiaen's textures and harmonic language, although *On the Tiles* for violin and piano lets looser in terms of contrasting material and emotions, especially in the wide-ranging, unfettered violin-writing. The title-piece, *Dancing with Bears*, is for oboe, violin, viola, cello and piano, and stands out in its subtle slow-moving sequences and the closing *Allegro*'s angular dotted rhythms and quirky voicings. Virtuoso deployment of registers lends interest to the well-crafted yet rather academic-sounding *Inventions* for flute and clarinet. Keeley's annotations admit to his avoidance of writing much for strings until he decided to take the plunge with *Tales from the Golden City* for violin solo. Despite some fine double-stop passages, the music would gain power and intensity if it branched more frequently into the higher range and made more imaginative use of *pizzicato* effects.

The four-movement Concerto for piano and 12 instruments offers this disc's strongest musical substance and intricate scoring. The first movement's neo-Baroque toccata-like textures get interesting when they begin to slow down and stick together, while the *Alla marcia* could be likened to Hindemith meeting Spike Jones's rhythm section. I would have expected a bravura fourth movement rather than a reticent finale but the third-movement *Adagio*'s fragile instrumental blending and tender lyrical writing is worth this well-recorded and superbly performed disc's asking price.

Jed Distler

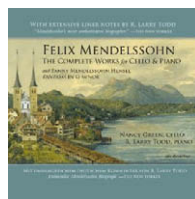
Mendelssohn

'The Complete Works for Cello and Piano'

Mendelssohn Cello Sonatas – No 1, Op 45; No 2, Op 58. Variations concertantes, Op 17 (two versions). Song Without Words, Op 109
Fanny Mendelssohn Albumblatt. Fantasia

Nancy Green *vc* **R Larry Todd** *pf*

JRI Ⓢ J138 (76' • DDD)



R Larry Todd will be familiar to many readers as a Mendelssohn scholar.

Clearly he's an able pianist too, which is just as well in this repertoire. A good marker is the introduction to the slow movement of the Second Sonata, where Todd is clear-sighted and direct, qualities emphasised by the relatively dry acoustic; Huw Watkins is a little more yielding here. When the cello finally enters, Nancy Green is intense in tone, Paul Watkins as natural-sounding as his brother; but it is Steven Isserlis who finds the greatest degree of desolation. In the first movement Green and Todd are a touch steadier than exuberant Isserlis and Watkins, though they capture the *scherzando* spirit of the second movement well. In the First Sonata the outer movements come off best, the inner movement perhaps a touch sedate: though it's an *Andante*, it's a capricious one, as the faster-paced Isserlis and Tan understand well. Again, Isserlis turns the Op 109 *Song Without Words* into a miracle of understatement. Green is more obviously emotional from the start, though she is restraint itself compared to Maisky's hyper-reactive, hyper-slow reading.

So, given the competition, is there a reason to choose Green, apart from Todd's fascinating notes? Well, there are some intriguing additions. The two pieces by Fanny Mendelssohn reveal, as ever, a huge talent lost to the composing world by the expectations of society. In the Fantasia, though, I did wonder if the faster section would have benefited from slightly less vibrato and a greater degree of whimsy. She wrote these two pieces for her brother Paul, the dedicatee of Felix's *Variations concertantes*. Todd has completed an abandoned variation from that set, which is a nice touch, if more of academic than musical interest. More substantial by far is Todd's realisation of the missing cello part of a set of variations which Mendelssohn wrote in 1830 for the Viennese cellist Josef Merk. Todd has clearly had some fun with these but to be honest I'd have difficulty in recognising this as the hand of Mendelssohn and the result sounds – perhaps inevitably – a touch generic.

Harriet Smith

Selected comparisons:

Isserlis, Tan (3/95) (RCA) 09026 62553-2

Maisky, Tiempo (A/02) (DG) 471 565-2GH

P & H Watkins (12/11) (CHAN) CHAN10701



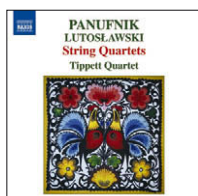
Close familiarity: pianist Lorenda Ramou and members of Ensemble Coriolis record chamber music by Konstantina Gourzi (review on page 47)

A Panufnik • Lutosławski

A Panufnik String Quartets – No 1; No 2, 'Messages'; No 3, 'Wycinanki'
Lutosławski String Quartet

Tippett Quartet

Naxos Ⓟ 8 573164 (80' • DDD)



The Panufnik Quartets have been recorded before, by the Chilingirian

Quartet on the defunct Conifer label (12/93) and the Silesian Quartet for Radio Katowice (currently available as a download), but they have never really gained a foothold in the repertoire – quite unfairly since they are in many respects among the composer's most arrestingly original works. And now, simultaneously, two new recordings appear: one from the Brodsky Quartet (reviewed below), also featuring music by Panufnik's daughter, Roxanna, and this from the Tippett Quartet, elegantly coupled with Lutosławski's single essay in the genre.

These are vital performances, edgy and energetic but rich in tone: the Brodskys are more convincing at the ethereal, I feel, at such moments as the 'Transformations'

movement of Quartet No 1, but both approaches serve the music equally well. One of the most memorable things here is the way Quartet No 2 appears as though from nowhere, only gradually acquiring sonic substance, the apparently extraterrestrial opening melting and becoming more earthly; and something similar happens with the Quartet No 3, written in the year before the composer died. It is subtitled *Wycinanki*, a reference to the Polish tradition of paper cuts, and the work's apparent fragility reflects that ephemeral art form. But, as Richard Whitehouse points out in his notes, the work is also 'didactic', in an inimitably Panufnikian way, and thoroughly explores different aspects of quartet-playing, aspects clearly relished by the Tippetts.

The choice of the Lutosławski Quartet to round out the disc is inspired because it so neatly and clearly demonstrates the differences between these two Polish composers. After the Panufnik works it sounds bright and acerbic but placing it thus at the end of the programme also enables the listener to hear the tightly structured way in which both composers worked, however different the final results. A really fine disc, excellently played and beautifully recorded. **Ivan Moody**

A Panufnik • R Panufnik

'Messages – Chamber Works for Strings'

A Panufnik String Quartets – No 1; No 2, 'Messages'; No 3, 'Wycinanki'. Song to the Virgin Mary^a A Panufnik/R Panufnik Modlitwa^a R Panufnik Memories of my Father

Brodsky Quartet with

^a**Robert Smissen** va ^a**Richard May** vc

Chandos Ⓟ CHAN10839 (78' • DDD)



This recording is a kind of conversation between father and daughter; it begins

with a luscious arrangement for string sextet of Andrzej Panufnik's *Modlitwa* by his daughter Roxanna, and thereafter the two composers alternate. The meat of the programme is the set of three string quartets written by the elder Panufnik, superbly performed here by the Brodsky. I think that the second movement of Quartet No 1, 'Transformations', is one of the finest things the composer ever wrote, and the performance here does it full justice, balancing to perfection its combination of fragility and extreme tension. The mysterious single-movement Quartet No 2, written in 1980, four years



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ALSO AVAILABLE



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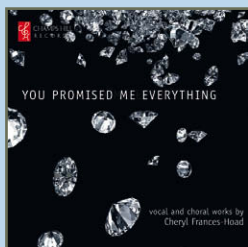
MAN OVERBOARD All Hands on Deck

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Richard Haughton

The Stoeger Prize is given every two years in recognition of significant contributions to the field of chamber music. At \$25,000, it is the largest prize awarded for chamber music composition.



CMS Artistic Directors David Finckel and Wu Han commented on the announcement: "We are thrilled to present the 2014 Stoeger Prize to Thomas Larcher. As a composer of great achievement on canvasses both large and small, he merits specific recognition for his work in the highly concentrated art form of chamber music, for which his bountiful sonic imagination is tremendously well suited. We find his music deeply communicative yet uncompromising, essential qualities for the ongoing vitality of the chamber music tradition, so it is with great pleasure that we add his name to the already luminous roster of Stoeger Prize recipients."

Czech Philharmonic

with Chief conductor Jiří Bělohlávek
announce

AUDITION

Concertmaster - Violin Required audition repertoire

1st round (anonymous):

choice of one of the following concertos with cadenza

- W. A. Mozart: Violin Concerto in A Major KV219
- W. A. Mozart: Violin Concerto in D Major KV218
- W. A. Mozart: Violin Concerto in G Major KV216

2nd round (non-anonymous):

a) choice of one of the following concertos:

- L. van Beethoven,
- P. I. Tchaikovsky,
- J. Brahms,
- J. Sibelius,
- A. Dvořák,
- F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy: Concerto in E-minor, op. 64,
- S. Prokofiev: Concerto No. 2,
- D. Shostakovich: Concerto No. 1,
- B. Bartók,
- E. Lalo: Symphonie espagnole

b) Orchestral solos:

- J. S. Bach: Matthäus-Passion
- J. Brahms: Symphony No. 1
- L. van Beethoven: Missa solemnis
- A. Dvořák: Symphony No. 8
- N. A. Rimsky-Korsakov: Sheherezade
- R. Strauss: Ein Heldenleben
- R. Strauss: Also sprach Zarathustra
- W. A. Mozart: Haffner Serenade (1st movement)
- L. Janáček: The Cunning Little Vixen
- B. Martinů: Symphony No. 6
- A. Dvořák: Carnival Overture

Audition dates: April 2 & 3, 2015

Please send completed applications with a photo and CV to:

Česká filharmonie – AUDITION / KONKURZ
Rudolfinum, Alšovo nábřeží 12,
CZ-11000 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Application closing date: February 20, 2015



Supremely articulated and concentrated: the Villiers Quartet offer the complete quartet works of Gordon Jacob's Royal College of Music student Robert Still

after the original version of No 1, is also something of a balancing act in this regard, but again the Brodskys more than have the measure of it. The late Quartet No 3 is altogether remarkable, written in the shadow of Panufnik's final illness, and all of its searching, sometimes unstable character is lost in this performance. Its final movement is surely one of the most beautiful things the composer ever penned.

Between the quartets are the two movements of *Memories of my Father* by Roxanna Panufnik, passionate evocations of time and character. The first is actually initially very close in character to some of the work of her father, as the composer notes in her fascinating booklet essay, but the way it dissolves into an arrangement of Gesualdo's *O vos omnes* is quite unexpected. The second is a mercurial evocation of a Greek holiday, recalled in photographs. This fine disc ends with a glowing performance of the elder Panufnik's *Song for the Virgin Mary*, originally written as a choral piece in 1964. **Ivan Moody**

Schubert

Piano Quintet, 'Trout', D667^a. Sonatina No 1, D384 (transcr Starker)^b. An Sylvia, D891^b. Gretchen am Spinnrade, D118^c. An die Laute D905^d

ad **Yossif Ivanov** *vn* ac **Béatrice Muthélet** *va*

ab **Ophélie Gaillard** *vc* ac **Stéphane Logerot** *db*

Delphine Bardin *pf*

Evidence Ⓢ EVCD003 (63' • DDD)



This is the kind of disc a reviewer dreads. Why, you might ask? Is it so terrible?

Far from it, and therein lies the rub. It's competent playing, but it's also unexceptionable and entirely unexceptional, which begs the question, who's it for? For a start, it's at full price. And this is the *Trout* we're talking about. I haven't listed comparisons because they'd take up more column inches than the review; but from classics from the Vienna Octet, Clifford Curzon and Daniel Barenboim to modern-day versions led by Martin Helmchen, Alfred Brendel (I'm thinking of the reading with Thomas Zehetmair), Paul Lewis, Thomas Adès... you get my drift. And that's just modern-instrument contenders.

So what about the other items – do they strengthen the disc's appeal? Of the three song transcriptions, the cellist comes across more winningly in 'An Sylvia' than the

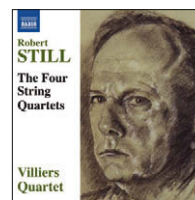
slightly astringent viola ('Gretchen am Spinnrade') or the thin-sounding violin ('An die Laute'). But why include Starker's arrangement of the First Violin Sonatina when you have a violinist to hand? The reading is fine but again with no distinguishing features. For friends and relatives only. **Harriet Smith**

Still

String Quartets - No 1; No 2; No 3; No 4

Villiers Quartet

Naxos Ⓢ 8 571353 (76' • DDD)



The four string quartets by Robert Still (1910-71) chart a fascinating stylistic

journey. Premiered in 1948 (and not heard again for fully 66 years), the First Quartet proves an amiable discovery, clean-cut and classical in demeanour. Neither it nor its (undated) successor outstay their welcome; indeed, the latter evinces a lucidity, poise and outdoor, folksy charm that are immediately endearing. During the early 1960s Still received informal lessons from no less an authority than Hans Keller. According to Edward Clark (who supplies

annotation), both remaining quartets post-date this period: enviably cogent, deeply felt and discerningly laid out for the medium, their markedly more progressive idiom will come as no surprise to those already familiar with Still's imposing one-movement Fourth Symphony from 1964 (coupled with his Third from 1960 and Humphrey Searle's excitingly taut Second on an unmissable Lyrita reissue – 11/09). Listening to these absorbing canvases one can't help but wonder what further riches this by all accounts rather self-effacing figure might have left us had he not suffered that fatal heart attack aged only 60.

No praise can be too high for these sublimely articulate and concentrated readings by the Villiers Quartet, for whose leader, James Dickenson, the whole project was very much a labour of love. Admirable sound and balance, too. **Andrew Achenbach**

Vivaldi

Six Sonatas, Op 5

Baltic Baroque / Grigori Maltizov

Estonian Record Productions © ERP7214

(44' • DDD)



Vivaldi's Op 5 consists of six sonatas: four for solo violin, followed by two trio sonatas,

the latter a well-established genre which the composer had already explored in his Op 2 of 1709. As the title-page of the Op 5 Sonatas makes clear, its contents were intended as a continuation of the earlier collection. All are in three or four movements, the majority of which are cast in familiar dance forms which characteristically fall into two halves.

Written in the lively Italian manner, with plenty of technical acrobatics at fast speeds, this is not the elegiac music of reflection or melancholy – there are no dark moments.

Baltic Baroque rise to the challenge with a sequence of energetic performances that are alive to the infectious foot-tapping appeal of Vivaldi's rhythms. The string tone is bright and the sense of ensemble effortless. Since the sonatas were recorded at different times and places, two different harpsichords were used: one Flemish, the other French; similarly, except for the cellist who plays on all the tracks, the string players, all of whom are equipped with period instruments, share the work between them. It is interesting to speculate whether, in an increasingly globalised world, there is a common international style for this kind of instrumental music. In practice, Baltic Baroque bring together the

qualities of Teutonic precision and Italian verve in a thoroughly convincing and attractive way. **Iain Fenlon**

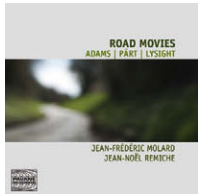
'Road Movies'

Adams Road Movies Lysight Gemini Sonata

Pärt Frates. Passacaglia. Spiegel im Spiegel

Duo Gemini

Pavane © ADW7562 (57' • DDD)



Plangent sounds and punchy rhythms permeate the five compositions for violin

and piano played very impressively on this recording by Jean-Frédéric Molard and Jean-Noël Remiche, aka Duo Gemini.

John Adams's music is often characterised by a strong kinetic drive and momentum, as heard in pieces which depict journeys of different kinds, such as *A Short Ride in a Fast Machine* (1986) and the more recent string quartet *Fellow Traveler* (2007). Composed in 1995, *Road Movies* evokes both the white-knuckle giddiness of the former while looking ahead to the nervous intensity of the latter. Despite its title, *Road Movies* opens in anything but a 'relaxed' style. Molard's urgent, edgy violin ensures there's no let-up until we arrive at a final, suspended harmonic. Some respite is afforded during a contemplative and atmospheric second movement, which flirts with blues-like gestures, before bursting into a fractious final movement that hurtles headlong by way of an insistent *moto perpetuo* figure towards a powerful, punchy ending. Molard and Remiche manage to navigate their way through the ferocious technical demands of Adams's music with ease. Their approach to Michel Lysight's no-nonsense *Gemini Sonata* (2011) is similar, although the sonata's attempt to assimilate neo-classical elements into what seems a primarily minimalist style is not always convincing.

Such effusive intensity is not demanded in Arvo Pärt's music, although there's plenty of fire in *Passacaglia* – the least known of the three pieces heard here. Every note and gesture is weighed up carefully and executed with precision, too, in *Spiegel im Spiegel* but *Frates* is a bit of a let-down. The tempo is too quick, a good half a minute faster than Kremer's original recording and almost a minute faster than Daniel Hope's more recent version on 'Spheres'. It's almost as if Molard and Remiche had recorded it immediately after the frenetic car-chase sequences of *Road Movies*. Some journeys are best taken at a slower pace. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Frates – selected comparisons:

Hope (5/13) (DG) 479 0571GH

Kremer, Jarrett (ECM) 476 3878

'Scheherazade'

Bortkiewicz Five Melodies from 'A Thousand

and One Nights' Khachaturian Clarinet Trio

Rimsky-Korsakov Sheherazade, Op 35

Zurich Ensemble

Paladino © PMR0036 (71' • DDD)



Sheherazade as chamber music?

Reduced to four

members? Somewhere

up there, Leopold Stokowski, the man who made this music a big-orchestra showpiece, is having a fit – especially since this recording is so successful in terms of the transcription and performance by the Zurich Ensemble. The four musicians – violin, piano, cello and clarinet – have the music in their souls and, through a combination of cunning and artistic will power, have made the piece their own.

The small-might-be-better trend was also manifested over the summer with Ensemble Festivo playing Schumann's Fourth Symphony with 10 instruments – somewhat convincingly but not nearly on the level of this group, whose transcription by Florian Noack and Benjamin Engeli is full of shrewd insights that save their endeavour from palm-court kitsch and give the music a greater sense of dramatic narrative. The solo violin (beautifully played by Kamilla Schatz) is pretty much intact, though the violin joins in with the cello and piano to create rhythmic momentum when necessary. Orchestral strings are replaced by piano, which also covers the harp arpeggios. The clarinet creates a primary voice in the texture when the solo violin is otherwise occupied. Of course, limitations are to be expected. With less sound to work with, grand *rubatos* aren't possible. Also, the group practises certain sleights of hand with spatial effects that are possible in the recording studio. If this four-person group isn't about to summon an imposing Cinemascope span of sound, why can't depth of field replace lost grandeur?

Sheherazade is framed by lesser-known works: a suite of incidental music by Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877-1955) for *A Thousand and One Nights* (pleasant enough but incidental) and Khachaturian's Trio for clarinet, violin and piano, a 1934 piece that's a bit of a find, full of attractive ideas that never fall back on the animal energy of his better-known works. **David Patrick Stearns**

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

ANTIPODEAN CHAMBER MUSIC

William Yeoman listens to a handful of recordings of music that reflects and responds to the landscapes of Australia and New Zealand



The Del Sol Quartet and Stephen Kent record Peter Sculthorpe's complete works for quartet and didgeridu

Musical conservatism is relative and isolation can just as easily explain radicalism. The composers of Australia and New Zealand have always embraced both extremes while at the same time exhibiting an Antipodean sensibility born of self-reliance and an abiding fascination with, and respect for, the rugged landscape of both countries. If much of the music on these six recent releases largely tends towards the conservative, it is because they betray two more Antipodean traits: friendliness and openness. From the late-Romanticism of Alfred Hill and the searing *cris de coeur* of Peter Sculthorpe to the sweetest, most tuneful breathings of Miriam Hyde's flute music and the funky effusions of Mark Zadro's *X Suite* for sax and piano, here is music which says 'G'day' without any embarrassment whatsoever.

In his booklet-note to this fifth volume of the string quartets of **Alfred Hill**, Donald Maurice writes that Hill (1869-1960) was 'the only significant composer of Australia and New Zealand representing the late Romantic era'. This is certainly borne out by the character of the 12th, 13th and 14th Quartets; despite their being written in the 1930s, Dvořák and even Mendelssohn spring readily to mind. All three are first recordings; all are played with great gusto by the New Zealand-based Dominion Quartet; all are worth hearing for their superb craftsmanship and a melodic freshness which is anything but derivative.

It's ironic that **Peter Sculthorpe's** complete string quartets with didgeridu should have been recorded by the only American ensemble featured in this roundup, the excellent Del Sol Quartet, joined by Englishman Stephen Kent on didgeridu. But these terrific performances of Quartets Nos 12, 14, 16 and 18 are thoroughly idiomatic, laying bare Sculthorpe's preoccupations with injustice – to the Aboriginals, to asylum seekers and to the land itself – with a youthful sincerity and passion. Kent became familiar with Aboriginal culture and the didgeridu while Music Director of Circus Oz, and he blends its distinctive drone with the strings with great skill – and respect.

In **Australian Portrait**, HD Duo (saxophonist Michael Duke and pianist David Howie) explore dynamic works for soprano, alto or baritone sax by Australian composers as diverse as Matthew Hindson, Anne Boyd, Michael Smetanin and Mark Zadro. Duke is a versatile player who embraces technical challenges with alacrity. Particularly effective is Boyd's *Gamba*; like Sculthorpe's, her music often references the Australian landscape and the culture of its earliest inhabitants, and in this case she paints a vivid portrait of the Ganba, 'a huge snake who roars and rumbles as it travels under the land'.

Home is where... features viola player Donald Maurice and pianist Richard Mapp playing music by New Zealand composer Douglas Lilburn as well as Enescu and the

Russian composer Boris Pigovat, whose Viola Sonata was written for Maurice. It's a somewhat dark, austere programme, the Lilburn especially – *Salutes to Seven Poets* – full of slow, intense music with the sun only occasionally bursting out from behind the clouds. The playing is exceptional throughout.

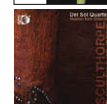
Miriam Hyde (1913-2005) was an Australian pianist, composer, writer and educator of rare talent, steeped in Germanic Romanticism and French Impressionism yet writing music wholly her own. 'Dancing Shadows' contains some frankly ravishing music, delicate and finely wrought, continually pulling free of its descriptive moorings to be carried off by darker undercurrents. One couldn't hope for better advocates for this music than flautist Bridget Bolliger and pianist Andrew West. As a bonus, Gerard Maguire reads 10 of Hyde's own poems, which contain their own fragrant, evocative music.

The Iridescent Flute features music for flute and piano by composers from my home state of Western Australia, performed by Perth musicians flautist Neil Fisenden and pianist David Wickham. This is colourful music indeed, tuneful and attractive, imbued with a French sensibility and shifting from Geoffrey Allen's *Watercolours* through Philip Wilcher's *Blue Glaze* to Ann Ghandar's *Iridescences* with much else either side and in between. The playing is as superlative as the music, such that one feels thoroughly irradiated by the washes of colour and sprays of sound. Utterly pleasurable from start to finish. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



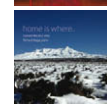
Hill String Quartets, Vol 5
Dominion Qt
Naxos (B) 8 573267



Sculthorpe Complete String Quartets with Didgeridu **Del Sol Qt, Kent**
Sono Luminus (F) DSL92181



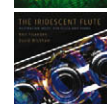
Various Cpsrs Australian Portrait **HD Duo**
Cala (F) CACD77013



Enescu. Lilburn. Pigovat
Home is where... **Maurice, Mapp**
Atoll (F) ACD413



M Hyde Dancing Shadows
Bolliger, West
Cala (F) CACD77019



Various Cpsrs The Iridescent Flute
Fisenden, Wickham
Stone Records (F) 5060192 780437

Leontyne Price

The American soprano had a gift for fusing voice, words and meaning, and was even able to adapt her vocal colours to her conductor, writes David Patrick Stearns

Leontyne Price's story would appear to be spectacularly simple. She had the voice of velvet, used it with wisdom and artistry for 50 years, set vocal and theatrical standards in Verdi, and then wound up her career not with a predictable return to the spirituals of her Laurel, Mississippi girlhood, but travelling from gala to gala singing the final scene from *Salome*.

As they say in theatre, it takes a good girl to play an exceedingly bad one. Price's bad girls trumped them all – the first indication that there's nothing simple about her artistic profile. In her prime, the soprano seemed to be capable of anything. The *lirico-spinto* weight of her voice – perfect for the Verdi Leonoras – also managed coloratura-orientated Gilda and Violetta arias, the faster passagework moulded at the service of the character behind the notes.

No wonder John Steane named her the greatest Verdi soprano of her time in his bible of 20th-century singers, *The Grand Tradition*. But rather than cycling out of Verdi in early middle age, Price sang Aida to the end of her opera career in 1985 at the age of 57. Of course her voice was far from her classic 1961 *Aida* recording with Jon Vickers, Rita Gorr and Sir Georg Solti. But it was her Aida that changed the world, not just musically, but by making the opera stage a possibility for anyone with the talent.

My best encounter with Price's Verdi was at a Chicago Symphony concert version of *La forza del destino* in 1979; her free, exuberant performance felt like a mating dance with conductor James Levine. A deeper appreciation of Price, though, begins by asking just how her tone worked in comparison to, say, her more Mozartian semi-

namesake, Margaret Price, whose cleanly circumscribed instrument revealed abundant character information packed into Verdi's vocal lines. But Leontyne's more succulent voice does much the same work, and with subliminal dynamic tension: a voice this fulsome shouldn't be so agile, so alive

with details. In her best years, Leontyne the Singer could accommodate the most minute choices Leontyne the Dramatist could devise. Her vocal colour could even change according to conductor. Among

her Verdi Requiem recordings, Leontyne's more lean-voiced outing with Fritz Reiner sounds more like Margaret.

Yet Leontyne was primarily a word-based singer. Growing up in Mississippi in the 1940s, African Americans could aspire to a concert career – but not to opera stardom (Marian

Anderson hadn't yet sung at the Met) or a conservatory education. Generous hometown sponsorship took her to the Juilliard School of Music, with an international tour of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* following graduation in 1952. A recently published live recording from Berlin shows a fully matured artist singing English more meaningfully than most Americans at that time. Perhaps this was down to the influence of the African-American church culture, where sung words are prayers? The most obvious proof of her word-centric singing is on 'Leontyne Price Sings Mozart', where the recitative in 'Deh vieni, non tardar' is a perfect fusion of voice, word and meaning.

En route to her 1961 debut at the Metropolitan Opera, Price had three momentous meetings in the mid-1950s: with composer Samuel Barber, who accompanied her Town Hall recital; with Herbert von Karajan, who

'Though Karajan cycled through singers to keep casts young and fresh, his partnership with Price lasted 20 years'

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1952 – *National and international tour of Porgy and Bess*

Though Gershwin's opera never figured heavily in Price's subsequent career, the RCA recording that came out of the tour was a career-defining event.

• March 1955 – *Auditioned for Karajan at Carnegie Hall*

Karajan was on tour with the Berlin Philharmonic and Price sang the Verdi aria, 'Pace Pace', so convincingly that their relationship was cemented; they subsequently recorded *Carmen*, *Tosca* and *Il trovatore*. Their relationship was built on honesty: when Price began falling into bad vocal habits, Karajan emphatically corrected them.

• May 1957 – *First Aida in Ann Arbor, Michigan*

No matter if the role was racially appropriate, her singing could be heard above full orchestra and chorus without audible strain or diminution in tone. Her *pièce de résistance* was 'O patria mia' with high floated tones aching with conflicted emotion.

• January 27, 1961 – *Double debut in Il trovatore*

The final ovation for Price and Franco Corelli at the Met lasted 35 minutes, though Corelli was so incensed at all of the attention lavished on Price that he threatened never to work with her again. He later became one of her most frequent co-stars.

• September 16, 1966 – *Antony and Cleopatra at the Met*

The opera all but finished Samuel Barber. The lavish Zeffirelli production got in the opera's way, and at one rehearsal Price became trapped inside a pyramid that refused to open.

• January 1985 – *Operatic farewell in Aida*

Price had returned to the opera a few years previously opposite Pavarotti and, although that vocal state of grace didn't fully continue in these farewell performances at the Met, how could Price have left the opera world quietly?

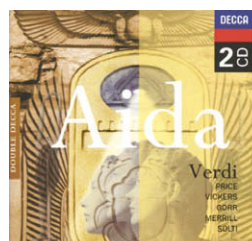


whose utterly merciless independence unfolds in every scene, and perhaps every phrase.

Her later-career Mozart grew a bit unruly by modern standards but her Puccini was predictably wonderful. Her mid-life conversion to Richard Strauss came a bit late. Though her Awakening Scene from *The Egyptian Helen* is acclaimed as one of her best recordings, her *Four Last Songs* is sung at a relentlessly *forte*, and *Ariadne auf Naxos* was best left to the other Price. What a pity that *Les Troyens* and *Alceste* were so seldom done back then. They might have suited her magnificently.

Price's greatest failure may eventually be remembered as her finest hour: *Antony and Cleopatra*. Before the opera's high-profile, 1966 flop, composer Barber thought it his greatest work – and wasn't wrong. The often-named culprit was Franco Zeffirelli, whose extravagant production put Price in costumes that made her resemble a walking sarcophagus. But how often has the radio relay of the premiere been duly re-examined? Easily found on YouTube, *Antony and Cleopatra* is a tough work, with Price playing her character not as a variation on Elizabeth Taylor (whose film version came out the previous year), but as a cool, political strategist. The lack of a love duet in this first version of the opera (which was later revised) was no oversight. Barber was creating people, not ornate historic objects. And if his original vision is ever rehabilitated, the intelligence of Leontyne Price's recorded characterisation will likely lead the way. ⑥

happened to be in New York on tour with the Berlin Philharmonic; and with Verdi's *Aida*, which became her signature role. The rest was fairly consistent glory. Though Karajan cycled through singers to keep casts young and fresh, his partnership with Price lasted 20 years, their *Carmen* collaboration perhaps trumping her Verdi, according to Steane. Agreed. While *Carmen* interpreters can be too sympathetic for their own good, Price creates a character



THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING

Verdi *Aida*

Leontyne Price *sop* Rita Gorr *mez*

Jon Vickers *ten* Robert Merrill *bar*

Rome Opera Orchestra and Chorus /

Sir Georg Solti

Decca ⑤ ② 460 765-2DF2 (7/62^R)

Instrumental



William Yeoman on Sculthorpe's complete works for piano:

'Cisłowska's great gift is to pick up on the saudade inherent in this distinctive, finely crafted music' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**



Lindsay Kemp on a harpsichord maker's own performance:

'The success stems from tempi which take time to enjoy the harpsichord's tone and the lyricism in the music' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**

JS Bach

Das wohltemperirte Clavier, BWV846-893

John Butt *hpd*

Linn ⑤ ④ CKD463 (3h 33' • DDD/DSD)



It's interesting that many harpsichordists purport to approach Bach's *Well-Tempered*

Clavier with scholarly authority, yet still come up with disparate interpretations. Consider the work's modern-day discography: you can choose between straightforward/leisurely (Gilbert/DG, Van Asperen/EMI); straightforward/moderate (Schornsheim/Capriccio, Moroney/Harmonia Mundi); straightforward-ish/fast (Newman/903 Records); agogic freedom/leisurely/often shapeless (Egarr/Harmonia Mundi); and now John Butt's agogic freedom/mostly fast and well shaped.

Harmonic tension and release govern the Book 1 C major Prelude's varying phrase-lengths, although its fugue's majestic *stretto* textures become congested at Butt's impatient pace. The C sharp major Prelude lilts with air in between the notes, even when the tempo marginally slows to allow the bass notes more resonant 'oomph', but the often austere C sharp minor Fugue is raring to dance the polka. The D sharp minor Fugue transpires faster than what you'd expect, following a rather choppy strum through the Prelude. But the F sharp minor Fugue's contrasting motifs benefit from Butt's animation and supple control as the counterpoint dances over the bar-lines. I also like the tiny emphasis on the A major Fugue subject's opening note, from which the subsequent rising patterns tag along like the tail of a kite, making the most of Bach's cross-rhythmic effects. Butt's autoharp-like arpeggiations make the B flat minor Prelude sound like an intimate folksong rather than the usual weighty tome, while a welcome *alla breve* pace helps unify the B minor Prelude's accentuations.

The rich timbral variety of Butt's responsive harpsichord (modelled after a

Mietke instrument familiar to Bach himself) reveals itself at the pedal point right at the start of Book 2's C major Prelude, and in the inner voices emerging from the C sharp major Prelude's full-bodied left-hand chords. Listeners resigned to heavy, ponderous readings of the D major, E flat and B flat minor Fugues will be relieved at Butt's joyful speeds, as well as his fluid and flexible accounts of the ricecare-like F sharp minor and E major Fugues. Rightly or wrongly, Butt points up the D minor Fugue's alternating triplet and duple rhythms with more rhythmic freedom than usual but the F major Fugue's skipping gait is steady and light. Strangely, Butt fusses over and sectionalises the F minor Prelude, yet brings out the G minor Prelude's French-overture character and delineates the G minor Fugue's hard-to-clarify counterpoint to perfection. Also note the G sharp minor Fugue's uncommonly fast tempo and asymmetrical phrasing. While Christine Schornsheim's recent edition benefits from more spacious engineering and artistic consistency, Butt offers plenty of food for thought, along with his own extensive annotations discussing both the music and issues of performance practice. **Jed Distler**

Selected comparison:

Schornsheim (6/12) (CAPR) C7115

Beethoven · Schubert

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 16, Op 31 No 1.

Variations and Fugue, 'Eroica', Op 35 Schubert Wandererfantasie, D760. German Dances, D783

Aaron Pilsan *pf*

Naïve ⑤ V5385 (76' • DDD)



already risen, and it is greatly to his credit that he uses his remarkable agility to a purely musical end in Schubert's *Wandererfantasie*. Others (Katchen, Graffman, etc) may be more trenchant and

rhythmically taut but Pilsan's way of telling us that the Fantasy is a lyrical as well as a virtuoso masterpiece is refreshing and rewarding. He sinks gratefully into the *Adagio*'s introspection and takes a subdued rather than barnstorming view of the concluding *Allegro* fugue. At the same time, there is no lack of virtuosity in the final race to the finish, where Schubert piles one outsize demand on top of another. But, again, excitement is tempered with musical discretion, making the *Wanderer* less exceptional and more closely related to the great Schubert sonatas.

Pilsan is graceful and fluent in the 16 *German Dances*, while in Beethoven's Op 31 No 1 Sonata he relishes the composer's off-the-cuff wit and quasi-operatic humour. His crystalline trills in the central *Adagio grazioso* float magically across the tick-tock accompaniment, and the several flourishes and cadenzas are given with a special imaginative leeway and freedom. Again, and to an even greater extent, the *Eroica* Variations' clear-sighted virtuosity is tailor-made for a pianist of such assurance, particularly when crowned with a no less fine sense of lyrical intensity. Pilsan is well recorded and his already distinctive personality and command make one eagerly look ahead to future releases.

Bryce Morrison

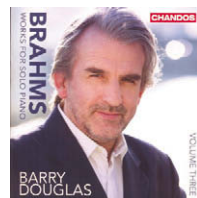
Brahms

'Works for Solo Piano, Vol 3'

Piano Sonata No 2, Op 2. Waltzes, Op 39. Piano Pieces, Op 119 - No 1; No 3. Intermezzo, Op 116 No 5. Theme with Variations (from String Sextet No 1, Op 18)

Barry Douglas *pf*

Chandos ⑤ CHAN10833 (67' • DDD)



The third volume in Barry Douglas's Brahms cycle once again suggests carefully considered and imaginative programme-planning rather than following a strict chronology. It is also surely true

that his playing has advanced into a different realm since his early competition-winning days. 'God's curse on pianists' (Douglas) necessitated a retreat and a process of recovery from what was at the time a limelight bordering on the lurid. And today I can only wonder at his Brahms, which is superbly masterful in both technique and musicianship (an indissoluble blend). There is no trace of distortion or egocentricity as in the theatricality that sometimes mars Julius Katchen's celebrated Brahms cycle. Instead you hear an unfaltering commitment to exclusively musical matters and the results are as moving as they are exemplary.

In the Waltzes, Douglas acknowledges grace and introspection as well as ebullience, is delightfully skittish in No 6 and is hauntingly alive to the gentle solace of No 15. And if there is a surprising touch of assertiveness in the Op 119 No 1 Intermezzo (it is marked *piano*) rather than a more customary bittersweet resignation, the focus is so unfailingly musical that you are compelled to think again and reconsider. Again, Douglas is more pensive than dancing or kaleidoscopic (Curzon or Rubinstein) in the C major Intermezzo from the same set but his way of opting for more substance than shadows is wholly convincing. His virtuosity is at full throttle in the F sharp minor Sonata, yet nothing is stretched or over-reached. Even in the unruly finale he shows a command that places every extravagant gesture in a clear perspective. Outstandingly recorded and presented, this is a fine addition to Brahms, to music which in such hands leaves you 'a different person'. **Bryce Morrison**

Chopin

Complete Mazurkas

Janina Fialkowska *pf*

ATMA Classique ② ACD2 2682 (150' • DDD)



Janina Fialkowska continues her Chopin odyssey with a subtle and elusive challenge. The 55 Mazurkas (extended from what was once considered 52) are Chopin's confessional diary: joyous, anguished, luxuriant, austere, testy and conciliatory, they are at the very heart of Chopin's genius. The 27 Etudes may be an intimidating lexicon of technique ('boy, did they ever give me grief' – the American pianist Ruth Laredo) but the Mazurkas are sufficiently rooted and ethnic that they can become inaccessible to all but the finest musicians.

Fialkowska, making her courageous return after serious illness, is Canadian but, as her name declares, of Polish origin. And Rubinstein, her longtime mentor, would have been the first to admire her unfailing musical honesty, her refreshing alternative to self-conscious sophistication. Sensitive to the mazurka's 16th-century peasant origins – the reverse of the polonaises, court and regal dances – she is no less aware of Chopin's alchemy, his transformation of the rudimentary into 'something rich and strange'. She captures 'the wood-note wild' of Op 6 No 3, the hiccuping burst into radiant dance elaboration in Op 41 No 3, and is sufficiently resourceful in Op 37 No 1 (the one Michelangeli, when caught in one of his rare forthcoming moods, played as an encore) to resolve its repetitions. She relishes the baleful poetry of Op 30 No 4; and if she is more emphatic than resilient in Op 33 No 2 (its popularity acquired via *Les Sylphides*), she is moving in the F minor and valedictory Mazurka – music, as she so hauntingly puts it, full of 'echoes of a Poland lost in time, its mood of deathly exhaustion'.

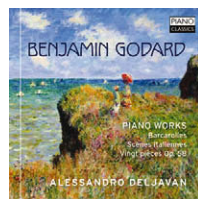
You won't hear Horowitz's wicked necromancy in his selection of the Mazurkas, or Argerich's magical fluidity in the Op 59 set. Above all, Rubinstein eclipses everyone in his 1938-39 set on Naxos, his patrician elegance a near-impossible act to follow. I should add for good measure that my own dream Mazurka performance is again from Rubinstein. This is of Op 56 No 3 in C minor, mercifully immortalised by BBC Legends. In the meantime, for a modern recording, you will find an impressive blend of sense and sensibility from Fialkowska, who is well recorded and presented. **Bryce Morrison**

Godard

Barcarolles – No 2, Op 80; No 3, Op 105. Des scènes italiennes, Op 126. 20 Pièces, Op 58

Alessandro Deljavan *pf*

Piano Classics ② PCL0072 (81' • DDD)



Godard's fortunes have taken a decided turn for the better in recent years, with two

recordings of both his piano concertos (Dutton, 11/11, 1/13; Hyperion, 9/14), another of his piano trios (MDG), as well as various individual solo piano works. He cannot now be simply defined as the one-hit wonder of the Berceuse from his opera *Jocelyn*.

Having said that, Godard produced a huge amount of music in all genres during his all-too-short span of 44 years and, as David Moncur's entertaining booklet points out, was not the most self-critical of composers (he was brought up in a wealthy environment of familial adoration). Alessandro Deljavan's selection begins promisingly enough with the beguiling Barcarolles Nos 2 and 3. It's easy to imagine a Shura Cherkassky or Stephen Hough throwing one in at the end of a recital. Only slightly less winning are the three *Scènes italiennes* ('Sérénade florentine', 'Sicilienne' and 'Tarantelle'), period picture postcards which, like the Barcarolles, are all under five minutes in length. Deljavan captures the essence of Godard's high-end salon world with wit, perfect grace and palpable affection (he is, incidentally, very well recorded).

The problem comes with the 20 *Pièces*, brief character pieces ranging in length from just over a minute to 5'30", all written for pupils or friends and of widely differing musical interest. Among some delectable *morceaux* are some real duffers, putting one in mind of Proust's opinion of Godard's songs, that 'listening to them was like being wearied by the trivialities of a lift attendant'. Best to cherry-pick from Op 58 – and not too many either. There are numerous Godard solos more worthwhile than most of these. **Jeremy Nicholas**

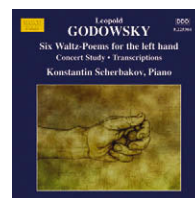
Godowsky

'Piano Music, Vol 12'

Six Waltz Poems for the Left Hand Alone. Concert Study, 'Grottesco', Op 11 No 1. Menuet. Gigue. Transcriptions: Am Meer (Schubert); Aufforderung zum Tanz (Weber); Du bist wie eine Blume (Schumann); Hochländisches Wiegenlied (Schumann); Perpetuum mobile (Weber); Rondino on a Theme of Beethoven (Kreisler); Ständchen (R Strauss); Still wie die Nacht (C Bohm); Trockne Blumen (Schubert); Vergebliches Ständchen (Brahms)

Konstantin Scherbakov *pf*

Marco Polo ② 8 225364 (70' • DDD)



The end is in sight: 12 down, three to go. Scherbakov's

Herculean task of recording all of Leopold Godowsky's music continues with this nicely varied selection of early and late original works, and transcriptions that range in difficulty from straightforward simplicity to technically treacherous. Not that there is ever anything of the page-turning slog to this unique project. Each piece, played with no little

affection, is wonderfully well characterised to show these largely forgotten works in the best possible light.

And Godowsky the transcriber is shown at his best in Richard Strauss's 'Ständchen' and Carl Bohm's 'Still wie die Nacht'. Here he seeks merely to offer a faithful reflection of the vocal line and accompaniment of these songs through sheer pianistic ingenuity. The last works he completed are the straightforward *Four Piano Transcriptions of German Lieder* (two by Schubert, one each of Schumann and Brahms) dating from 1937. On the other hand, Godowsky's contrapuntal take on *Invitation to the Dance* makes outlandish demands with its artful thematic combinations and cheeky modulations. One has to be familiar with Weber's original before fully appreciating Godowsky's mischievous treatment and, to fully enjoy it, not troubled by the loss of its light-headed gaiety. The same goes for the *Perpetuum mobile* from Weber's C major Sonata, which, by piling Pelion upon Ossa, means it is physically impossible to play at the original *presto* (3'15" is the average time). Scherbakov clocks in at an amazing 4'39", even faster than the great Grigory Ginzburg's 1950s recording (4'50").

Of the other works, of by far the most interest are the *Six Waltz-Poems for the Left Hand Alone*, immeasurably more attractive than the leaden *Suite for the Left Hand* on Vol 11 (A/13). Godowsky, not anything like such a gifted melodist as his friend Rachmaninov, here dreams up some attractive ideas that vie with his most successful waltz, *Alt Wien*. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Haydn

Piano Sonatas - No 38, HobXVI/23; No 39, HobXVI/24; No 47, HobXVI/32; No 59, HobXVI/49

Denis Kozhukhin *pf*

Onyx (M) ONYX4118 (52' • DDD)



Christa Landon's numbering 1 to 62 is followed. But her 1960s edition was superseded in 2009 when Wiener Urtext published Ulrich Leisinger's updated revision. He explains: 'Landon's idea of establishing a verified chronological order has proved impossible to realise. For the new edition a pragmatic rule was chosen to facilitate finding the individual pieces; the sonatas are numbered consecutively and are ordered according to the Hoboken numbers.'

At the outset Denis Kozhukhin doesn't promise much. His tempo for the opening

movement of HobXVI/49 (Landon's No 59) – too fast for *Allegro* – is glib, the first theme isn't slurred as marked and his response to a rich harmonic range is neither thoughtful nor analytical. He improves; the slow movement is a real *Adagio* with a sharply contrasted B flat minor section, the finale an intelligently assessed *Tempo di menuetto*.

The remaining sonatas, perhaps written for harpsichord, don't have dynamic markings; but Kozhukhin treats them as piano music, offering his own dynamic variants. The first movement of HobXVI/23 (No 38) has no tempo indication and Kozhukhin's choice of *Allegro* isn't as credible as Tzimon Barto's slower, malleable option. Nor is he as credible as Alfred Brendel, whose tauter control of the first movement of HobXVI/32 (No 47) better evokes its minor-key character. But again Kozhukhin rises to the occasion in the remaining movements of these works; and is really at his best in HobXVI/24 (No 39), spaciouly expressive in the *Allegro* first movement, melancholy in the Baroque-type *Adagio* and pointedly rhythmic in the final *Presto*.

Nalen Anthoni

HobXVI/49 (No 59) – selected comparison:

Schiff (5/99⁸) (TELD) 2564 69967-4

HobXVI/23 (No 38) – selected comparison:

Barto (2/10) (ONDI) ODE1154-2

HobXVI/32 (No 47) – selected comparison:

Brendel (11/85⁸) (DECC) 478 1369DOR4

Rachmaninov

'Complete Piano Works, Vol 1'

Variations on a Theme of Corelli, Op 42. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 36 (revised version, 1931).

Moments musicaux, Op 16. Morceaux de salon, Op 10. Etudes-tableaux, Op 39

Artur Pizarro *pf*

Odradek (M) ② ODRCD315 (145' • DDD)



The 1990 winner of the Leeds International Piano Competition ranges

far and wide and, having recently introduced us to the piano concertos of Artur Napoleão and Henrique Oswald (Hyperion, 11/14), now embarks on the daunting task of the complete solo piano works of Sergey Rachmaninov.

While Peter Avis's booklet essay is usefully chronological, Pizarro's programme thankfully is not. The first of the initial two CDs (there will be seven in all) opens with a pair of works from 1931, the *Variations on a Theme of Corelli* and the revised version of the Sonata No 2. Pizarro

produces a gorgeous tone from his chosen Yamaha CF6 (a seven-foot grand with almost the sonority of a nine-foot) and the 20 brief variations are as lovely as I've heard. Like Richard Farrell (now on Atoll), he prefers to play down the bravura aspects of this most intimate of the composer's late works. There is no lack of bravura in Pizarro's resonant, lucidly articulated account of the Sonata which, for once, is not a hybrid conflation of the original and revised versions that many pianists have felt entitled to serve up in recent years. In the six *Moments musicaux* composed in 1896, the first works in which Rachmaninov truly found his own voice, Pizarro plays the later version of No 2 (*Allegretto*) as recorded by Rachmaninov himself in 1940. This is superbly done but the slow *Moments* (Nos 3 and 5) are too measured. Here I prefer Howard Shelley (his complete works on Hyperion from 1985), who also brings a lighter touch to No 4 (*Presto*).

In the earlier seven *Morceaux de concert*, again Pizarro takes a more languid view than Shelley of the slow numbers (though nothing as extreme as Idil Biret on Naxos). The 'Valse', however, benefits from the pianist's innate charm, and the famous 'Humoresque' compares favourably with the composer's own airy insouciance. Contrasted with the *Morceaux*, the second set of *Etudes-tableaux* from 1917 gives us the mature Rachmaninov, with Pizarro once more alive to the drama and physicality of the music with a cushioned, penetrating depth of sound from *forte* to *fff*. This is a fine, deeply felt account of Op 39 but less successful as a whole (and especially in the great E flat minor Etude) than my personal benchmark, Rustem Hayroudinoff on Chandos. So, with a few question marks, much to relish and look forward to.

Jeremy Nicholas

Corelli Vars – selected comparison:

Farrell (1/11) (ATOL) ACD909

Moments musicaux, Morceaux – selected comparison:

Shelley (10/88⁸, 3/94) (HYPE) CDS44041/8

Etudes-tableaux – selected comparison:

Hayroudinoff (2/07) (CHAN) CHAN10391

Schubert

Piano Sonata No 4, D537. Hungarian Melody, D817. Valses nobles, D969.

Valses sentimentales, D779

Guillaume Coppola *pf*

Eloquencia (E) EL1445 (64' • DDD)



Initial enthusiasm for a record largely devoted to Schubert dances is easily dampened if the



Studied performance: Aaron Pilsan tempers excitement with musical discretion in piano works by Beethoven and Schubert (review on page 56)

performances are insufficiently vital, affectionate and ebullient. Diamond chippings from the master's workshop, the 12 *Valses nobles* and the 34 *Valses sentimentales* (titles later borrowed by Ravel), to say nothing of the entrancing *Mélodie hongroise*, are alive with twists and turns and startling modulations that make them so much more than 'minor works by a major composer'. Often offered as delectable encores by Schubertians of the stature of Brendel, Imogen Cooper and, most of all, Myra Hess, they can send listeners home with a smile on their face and a spring in their step (though with an occasional awareness of darker imaginings).

Alas, Guillaume Coppola, described in the accompanying blurb as 'scintillating', 'enigmatic', 'stunning' and 'among the élite of today's young pianists', is only intermittently engaged in his enviable task. How one longs for playing less studio-bound, for a greater sense of imaginative freedom. Again, in the first of Schubert's three A minor sonatas there is too little awareness of the composer's already audacious drama and experiment, too much playing for safety. The central *Allegretto quasi andantino*'s tick-tock momentum becomes monotonous; and although there is a greater sense of Schubert's *vivace*

qualification in the finale there is, overall, too little lyric intensity. The recording is adequate rather than outstanding.

Bryce Morrison

Schubert • Mazzoli

Mazzoli Isabelle Eberhardt Dreams of Pianos

Schubert Piano Sonata No 20, D959.

Moments musicaux, D780

Shai Vosner *pf*

Onyx ® ONYX4136 (77) • DDD



Shai Vosner muses in his booklet essay on the notion of Schubert and time, observing

that often the composer's short pieces imply a broader dimension than their span suggests: 'like looking at the horizon through the window of a small room'. You certainly sense that in Vosner's reading of the *Moments musicaux*, which are given time to breathe and reflect. In some I might have expected a degree more playfulness (No 3, for instance, where Lupu enthralled) but Vosner's interpretations draw you ineluctably into his own vision.

You have to be a bit careful what you programme alongside Schubert but Missy

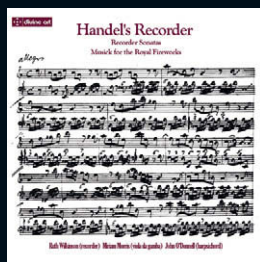
Mazzoli's enticingly titled *Isabelle Eberhardt Dreams of Pianos* is a clever choice, using as it does fragments from Schubert's D959 Sonata. Setting a minimalistic piano line against electronics, it imagines the dying memories of Isabelle Eberhardt, who gave up a life of luxury to become an explorer but was killed in a flood at just 27 – the age that Missy Mazzoli was when she composed the piece.

Vosner moves straight from memories of Schubert's A major Sonata to the genuine article, setting off with a demonstration of power without aggression – in marked contrast to Barenboim's recent traversal. In Lewis's hands, the slow movement has a sense of trudging weariness akin to the protagonist's step in *Winterreise*; there's a little more lilt in Vosner's reading but also a profound inwardness, which makes the cataclysmic outburst all the more shocking – as if moving from a catatonic state to something blazingly alive – and the return to the opening pace is fragile indeed. If others find more sense of play in the *Scherzo* (Andsnes among them), Vosner is powerfully convincing in the finale. Slightly steadier than the songful Lupu, he nevertheless proves himself a Schubertian of real stature. **Harriet Smith**

January Releases



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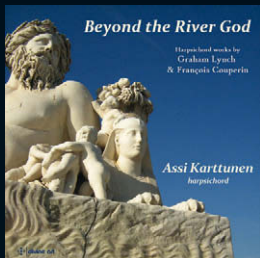
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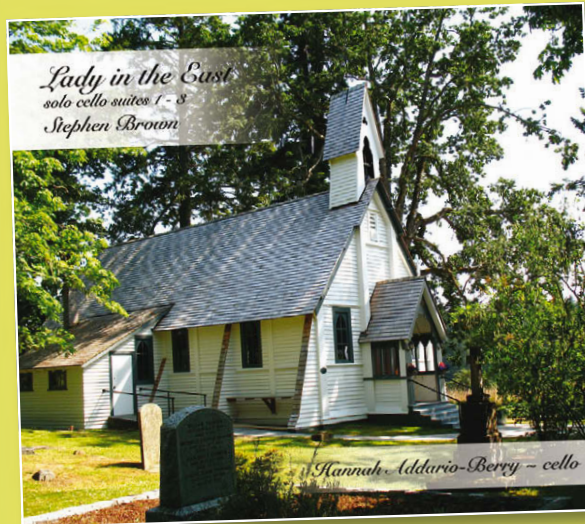


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Pf Son No 20, Moments musicaux – selected comparison:

Lupu (8/77^R, 4/83^R, 3/06) (DECC)

475 7074DC4 or 478 2340DB10

Pf Son No 20 – selected comparison:

Lewis (5/03^R, 7/14) (HARM) HMC90 2165/6

Barenboim (10/14) (DG) 479 2783GH5

Schumann

Etudes symphoniques, Op 13.

Kreislarian, Op 16. Toccata, Op 7

Nelson Goerner *pf*

Zig-Zag Territoires (P) ZTZ352 (71' • DDD)



Nelson Goerner presents some of Schumann's wildest children in this finely recorded recital, beginning with the mighty *Etudes symphoniques*. Beauty of sound is uppermost in the theme, which perhaps dreams a little too freely. In general he is most convincing in the faster movements (the third étude or the motoric seventh). But I'd question whether the eighth étude is truly *sempre marcatisimo*, while the ninth doesn't have the sense of being on a knife-edge in the way of Géza Anda or Alexander Romanovsky.

There's no definitive solution when it comes to the placing of the posthumous variations: Goerner inserts them between Etudes 9 and 10, thus forming a poetic interlude very much in keeping with his approach to the work as a whole. He's particularly effective in the fifth of the variations, very much in the spirit of Cortot. Then we're back to reality in the propulsive 10th étude. Crucially, he finds a fast tempo for the final number but it could be a degree more gung-ho, technically speaking (as witness Hamelin). And Goerner's use of desynchronisation here is a bit too prevalent for my taste. But one thing he does consistently do is seek out unusual and effective voicings – eg in the first posthumous variation but also in *Kreislarian*, notably in the second and third numbers. He's also alluring in the fifth movement, and entirely satisfying until you hear Perahia play it. In the lolling closing movement Goerner is dreamier than Uchida, whose intensity lingers long in the mind.

We end with Schumann's Toccata which, I can't help feeling, is perhaps not Goerner's piece. Again, there's lots of interest in the textures but I craved a bit more Horowitzian pizzazz (as can be heard in a number of recorded performances). Alternatively, at a not dissimilar tempo to Goerner, Josef Lhévinne shows just what can be done. **Harriet Smith**

Etudes symphoniques – selected comparisons:

Cortot, r1929 (8/54^R) (EMI) 704907-2

Hamelin (5/01) (HYPE) CDA67166

Anda, r1955 (2/04) (BBCL) BBCL4135-2

Romanovsky (DECC) 476 6208

Kreislarian – selected comparisons:

Uchida (5/95^R) (PHIL) 475 8260POR

Perahia (1/98^R) (SONY) 88691 91256-2

Toccata – selected comparison:

Lhévinne (4/39^R, 10/98) (PHIL) 456 889-2PM2

Schumann

Piano Sonata No 3, Op 14. Three Romances, Op 28. Humoreske, Op 20

Vincenzo Maltempo *pf*

Piano Classics (P) PCL0074 (71' • DDD)



Winner of the prestigious Premio Venezia prize, Vincenzo Maltempo rides high among many young and gifted Italian pianists. And after his Alkan discs (6/14, 9/14), it is appropriate that he should open his present Schumann recital with the Third Sonata, pre-dating Alkan's own *Concert sans orchestre*. Like the First Sonata but unlike the Second, the F minor Sonata is the reverse of compact, a wild outpouring that must have thrown Clara's more conservative nature as well as adding fuel to Chopin's scorn. The *Prestissimo possibile* finale in particular, with its bolt of lightning before the tearaway coda, shows Schumann as if pursued by the demons of hell.

Such writing, of a fierce virtuoso intricacy, suits Maltempo's impulsive nature ideally. Less contained than Pollini and more attuned to Horowitz's flamboyance, his performance captures all of Schumann's teeming imagination. True, the sonata's opening rhetorical gesture is less than articulate and Maltempo's *rubato* can be fitful and impulsive, but he has more than the measure of Schumann's volatility and is always true to his own romantic lights.

The turbulent First Romance again provides ideal fodder and so to does the Third, with its grotesque galumphing march rhythm. And while I would hardly class Maltempo's *Humoreske* with Lupu (gloriously sensitive to Eusebius, Schumann's man of dreams) or Anderszewski (no less alert to Florestan, the man of action), it is nonetheless remarkable. Above all, Maltempo's well-recorded performances have nothing of the studio but crackle with all the electricity of the concert hall.

Bryce Morrison

Humoreske – selected comparisons:

Lupu (4/95) (DECC) 440 496-2DH or 478 2340DB10

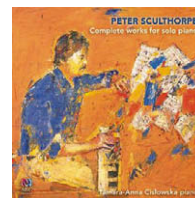
Anderszewski (1/11^R) (VIRG/ERAT) 642022-0

Sculthorpe

'Complete Works for Solo Piano'

Tamara-Anna Cislowska *pf*

ABC Classics (P) (C) ABC481 1181 (159' • DDD)



The last time I saw Peter Sculthorpe, who died in August aged 85, was two

years ago when I visited the small studio behind his Woollahra house in Sydney. One wall was covered in books, while a wonderful 18th-century Japanese screen hung over a writing desk on another. Near the window was his famous Moore and Moore baby grand, which as Chris Latham writes in his insightful notes to this superb release, 'was by no means an exceptional piano...[but] had held pride of place at the centre of his composing world for over 50 years'.

Sculthorpe had an abiding interest in Australian Aboriginal music and it is present in one form or another throughout much of his oeuvre. As he told me that day, this was not an appropriation but an absorption. 'You have an indigenous melody that grew from the land, that was a way of looking at the land. I think about the melody and sing it to myself as a way of absorbing it, and it does change. It's a borrowing, yes; but it also becomes my way of looking at the land – based on their way.'

Perhaps Australian pianist Tamara-Anna Cislowska has absorbed Sculthorpe's music, which she has been playing all her life, the same way. Her complete survey of the solo piano music takes us from the early, Debussy-influenced Nocturnes through simple character pieces such as *Sea Chant* and *Left Bank Waltz*, via more experimental works like *Koto Music I* and *II*, which require the performer to play the piano 'from the inside', to one of many versions of *Djilile* (an Aboriginal song from Arnhem Land), *A Little Book of Hours* (depicting 'a day in the life of a Koori child growing up in south-eastern Australia') and his final and longest solo piano work, *Riverina*.

Cislowska's great gift is to pick up on the *saudade* inherent in this distinctive, finely crafted and for the most part lyrical music, and project it outwards in an utterly natural, unforced manner. A profoundly affecting release which will be a revelation to some, to others a homecoming.

William Yeoman

Yulianna Avdeeva

Chopin Preludes, Op 28 **Prokofiev** Piano Sonata No 7, Op 83 **Schubert** Drei Klavierstücke, D946

Yulianna Avdeeva *pf*

Mirare (M) ② MIR252 (91' • DDD)



Four years after winning the 2010 International Chopin Competition in

Warsaw – the first woman to do so since Martha Argerich in 1965 – Yulianna Avdeeva makes her debut solo recording (she has recorded both Chopin concertos on an Erard piano for the Fryderyk Chopin Institute). She begins with Schubert's *Drei Klavierstücke*, D946, surely intended to be a third set of four Impromptus had not death intervened; Brahms entitled them *Klavierstücke* when his edition was published in 1868. Alternatively, one could see them as a three-movement sonata. Whatever your view, from the first bar Avdeeva makes you sit up and take note. Here is an artist who can truly make the piano sing – and to no greater effect than in the A flat minor Trio of No 2. In the opinion of the pianist this is 'one of the most personal and moving statements in all classical music'. The way she plays this, you might find yourself agreeing.

The second of Prokofiev's three 'War Sonatas' opens with a movement marked *Allegro inquieto* ('restless', 'nervy'). Avdeeva sacrifices its unsettling character for beauty of tone and exemplary voicing, its spikier passages seeming almost jaunty. The central movement, with its cello-like main theme, is captivating. Where she is less than persuasive is in the finale, among the most electrifying of the genre. *Precipitato* Prokofiev instructs, implying danger – I think of it as someone fleeing from an implacable foe with its relentless, threatening quaver B flat/crotchet C/quaver B flat motif. Richter, who gave the first performance in 1943, is still supreme (his 1958 recording). Avdeeva gives us Prokofiev-lite, a smooth ride in a fast machine.

Disc 2 has just the 24 Preludes. There is much to commend here, not least Avdeeva's consistently clear singing quality, a joy to hear and very well captured by Mirare in a natural acoustic. It's a fine account but in some of the quieter Preludes (eg Nos 4 and 6) her asynchronous melody and accompaniment becomes faintly irritating. In the end others have something more personal to say, not least Cortot (1926) and the forgotten Robert Lortat, whose 1928 recording for Columbia (now

on Doremi) deserves to become far better known. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Prokofiev – selected comparison:

Richter (NAXO) 8 111387

Chopin – selected comparisons:

Cortot (EMI) 361541-2

Lortat (DORE) DHR7994/5

Guiomar Novaes



'The Complete Published 78rpm Recordings'

Albéniz Espana, Op 165 – No 2, Tango. Ibéria –

Evocación; Triana **JS Bach** Toccata, BWV912

Beethoven The Ruins of Athens – Turkish March

Chopin Ballade No 3, Op 47. Mazurka No 23,

Op 33 No 2 **F Couperin** Pièces de clavecin –

La Fleurie, ou La Tendre Nanette **Daquin**

L'hirondelle **Gluck** Caprice sur les Airs de Ballet

d'Alceste. Iphigenie en Aulide – Gavotte. Orfeo

ed Euridice – Dance of the Blessed Spirits

Gottschalk Grand Fantasy on the Brazilian

National Anthem (two performances)

MC Guarnieri Toccata **Ibert** Histoires – Le petit

âne blanc **Levy** Tango brasileiro **Liszt** Two

Concert Studies, S145 **MacDowell** Hexentanz,

Op 17, No 2 **Mendelssohn** Song Without Words,

'Spring Song', Op 62 No 6 **Mompou** Jeune fille

au jardin **Moszkowski** Guitare, Op 45 No 2.

La jongleuse, Op 52 No 4 **Mozart** Rondo, K511

Paderewski Nocturne, Op 16 No 4 **Philipp**

Feux-follets, Op 24 No 3 (two performances)

O Pinto Cenas infantis **Rubinstein** Nocturne,

Op 75 No 8 **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas –

Kk125; Kk450 **R Strauss** Ständchen, Op 17 No 2

Villa-Lobos Prole do Bebê – A Pobrezinha;

Branquinha; O Polichinelo. As Três Marias.

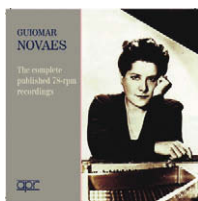
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Guiomar Novaes *pf*

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From Victor and Columbia originals,

recorded 1919-47



'Guiomar Novaes: The Complete Published 78rpm Recordings' consists

largely of those short-but-sweet encore pieces that had her adoring audiences (notably in America) eating out of her hand. For one critic these discs 'are among the supreme treasures of piano discography', the playing that of 'a musician by the grace of God'. All this is complemented by memories of Novaes's first New York recital, which 'threw the critics into a tizzy'. Novaes was to Brazil as, say, Annie Fisher was to Hungary, held in awe and affection by her musical compatriots. Her technique, 'extraordinary in its suppleness', supported a musical personality of a beguiling charm, a quality rarely encountered in today's more severe musical climate; a climate associated with

an absence of *joi de vivre* long lamented by Arthur Rubinstein. You are reminded, too, of a naturalness and insouciance far removed from so many of today's recordings, where over-editing can suck the very lifeblood out of a performance.

Novaes opens and closes with two performances of Gottschalk's *Grande fantasia triomphale sur l'hymne national brésilien*, a sort of Alkan-goes-to-Brazil oddity that, understandably, she made her own. At the other end of the spectrum, what poise and lucidity in Bach's D major Toccata before she wings us away to the music of her native land, to Villa-Lobos and Guarnieri (the latter's Toccata too easily carried away in its own busy small-talks). Novaes can be brisk, even brusque in Mozart's A minor Rondo, as if to avoid a bittersweet prophecy of Chopin, while two items from Albéniz's *Iberia* find her turning their languor and ferocity into comfortable salon proportions. But elsewhere there is vertiginous Scarlatti and a delightful tribute to Novaes's husband, Octávio Pinto, who takes his line very much from Mompou and Villa-Lobos.

Playing then of another age and time, a sheer magic beautifully presented and with outstanding transfers. **Bryce Morrison**

'Grounds for Pleasure'

'Keyboard Music from 17th-Century England'

Anonymous My Lady Carey's Dompe **Blow**

Ground in Gamut Flatt. Mortlack's Ground. Suite

in D minor – Ground; Hornpipe; Minuet **Byrd**

A Grounde. My Ladye Nevell's Grownde **Croft**

Suite in A – Ground; Minuett **Gibbons** Fantasia.

Ground. Italian Ground. Pavan Lord Salisbury

Inglot The Leaves Bee Greene **Purcell** Chacone.

Ground in D minor. Hornpipe. A New Ground

Tomkins Grounde. A Ground in Gamut.

A Short Verse

Colin Booth *hpd*

Soundboard (P) SBCE214 (67' • DDD)



This disc has two themes to bind it: English keyboard music of the 17th

century, and pieces composed over a ground bass. That, in case you should have doubted it, is a pretty rich field – 'Grounds for Pleasure'.

Colin Booth is a harpsichord maker as well as player (one of his instruments can be heard in Florilegium's new *Brandenburg Concertos* recording, reviewed on page 24), and here he performs on a 1661 instrument he himself has restored, French in style but by an Italian maker, meaning that a little Italianate attack and fire (thanks to brass

stringing) joins with sufficient sustain to give it a touch of Gallic nobility. It comes into its own most in the melancholy grandeur of the grounds by Byrd and Tomkins, and Gibbons's marvellous *Pavan Lord Salisbury*, yet the success of Booth's performances also stems from tempi which take time to enjoy not just the harpsichord's tone but the richness and lyricism that is there in the music. Thus, even with a reduced registration, William Inglot's *The Leaves Bee Greene* also emerges strongly, its beautiful tune positioned compellingly in the bass, and only Blow's *Ground in Gamut Flatt* comes across as a little dogged.

Booth also makes imaginative use of the instrument's colour range, however; this harpsichord comes with 8' and 4' registers that cannot be coupled, which, intentionally or otherwise, throws the emphasis from loud and soft sounds on to the exploration of different timbres. The use of the 4', sounding an octave higher, to accompany the right hand in Purcell's *A New Ground* or Gibbons's *Italian Ground* is especially effective, lending the music delicacy and perhaps even a touch of ironic detachment.

There are a few little note-smudges here and there but the recording is good, and overall this is a characterful, honest and engaging recital. **Lindsay Kemp**

'Guitarra Clásica del Perú'

'Discovered Treasures of Latin American Guitar'

Minuets by **Anonymous** and **Ximénez**

Alexander-Sergei Ramírez *gtr*

AVI-Music © AVI8553316 (74' • DDD)



Sucre, Bolivia, 2004.

A man stops the American historian William L Lofstrom

in the street and offers to sell him a selection of handwritten music manuscripts taken from a trunk he inherited from four deceased cousins. Lofstrom buys them, sensing their worth. The remainder of the music is eventually purchased, the totality comprising symphonies, Masses, chamber music, songs and instrumental music by the Peruvian-born composer Pedro Ximénez (1780-1857), former Master of Music at Sucre Cathedral.

Of the above works, only a solo guitar piece and a collection of 100 guitar minuets were ever published. According to the Peruvian guitarist Alexander-Sergei Ramírez, Ximénez's minuets, relying as they do on European models but influenced by Latin American styles,

provide a valuable link between the Viennese classical music of composers such as Ximénez's contemporary Fernando Sor and the later guitar music of Latin American composers such as Barrios, Villa-Lobos and Antonio Lauro.

Ramírez intersperses 23 of Ximénez's minuets – which, amid *glissandos*, overlapping tones and vigorous strumming, move easily from the cleanly classical (No 1) through the sharply contrasted passages of No 98 to the richly textured, declamatory mode of No 76 – with anonymous late-18th- and early-19th-century music taken from three notebooks found in Lima. Of especial interest here are a sonorous, Scarlattian *Andante* and an exciting D minor Fandango, both from the *Cuaderno de Mathias Maestro* of 1786. The playing throughout is outstanding and often better than the music, which, it has to be said, is possibly more of musicological than artistic value. **William Yeoman**

'Solo'

Cassadó Suite Golijov Omaramor Kodály

Sonata, Op 8 **Sheng** Seven Tunes Heard in China

Alisa Weilerstein *vc*

Decca © 478 5296DH (78' • DDD)



It feels a little dangerous to say this, but the opening of Alisa Weilerstein's

'Solo' hits the listener between the eyes in a way that was particularly characteristic of Jacqueline du Pré's earlier performances. The opening of Kodály's highly significant Sonata, Op 8, has much of du Pré's sinuous but elegiac passion that manages, despite pushing the instrument (and Weilerstein's 18th-century English cello is nothing like as robust as du Pré's 1673 Stradivari) to its limits, to remain emotionally balanced at the same time. Being able to trust a performer in that way makes for an exciting listening experience, especially in a piece such as the Kodály that forms the backbone of the disc. In it, she showcases the sound the cello can make and the emotion behind the work, but not at the expense of the musical argument. This is particularly noticeable in the first movement of the Kodály, where there is a build-up through the central phrase, with its resolution only coming after an almost free-standing, florid vignette that Weilerstein uses to intensify the power of the phrase it interrupts, rather than deflate it, as many other performances do.

As a whole, too, this is a very well chosen programme. Although this will certainly

find tenacity in the catalogue as a significant recording of the Kodály Sonata, it is fundamentally a collection of pieces inspired by folk music but which illustrate how the greatest composers of these periods managed to translate their folkloric origins and influences into high art works.

Caroline Gill

'Violino solo'

JS Bach Solo Violin Partita No 3, BWV1006

Ernst Der Erbkönig: Grand Caprice No 26

R Haas Short Variations on a Theme of Paganini

Kreisler Recitative and Scherzo Caprice, Op 6

Paganini Caprices, Op 1 – No 5; No 15; No 24

Ysaÿe Solo Violin Sonata, 'Ballade', Op 27 No 3

Jiří Vodička *vn*

Supraphon © SU4175-2 (61' • DDD)



Jiří Vodička is the young soloist of the Janáček Philharmonic Orchestra in Ostrava

and has already made a considerable name for himself as a virtuoso among those looking slightly under the radar. Although 'Violino solo' contains many of the showpieces to be expected – the third of the Ysaÿe Sonatas, written for Jacques Thibaud, for instance, and the Kreisler *Recitative und Scherzo* – there are a number of gems here that are so well played that to be introduced to them in such flawless conditions is a real gift. The Grand Caprice on Schubert's 'Der Erbkönig' by Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (probably the most natural heir to Paganini, both as virtuoso and composer for violin) is a particularly vivid sketch of the marriage of musical spectacle to the complicated techniques such as polyphonic writing and *scordatura* that both Paganini and Ernst owed as much to Biber and Schmelzer of more than a century before as to each other; as is the first recording of the *Short Variations on a Theme of Paganini* by Roman Haas, a Czech composer whose directness in his approach to the virtuoso possibilities of the violin expounds the same artistic honesty that Vodička does in his performances of everything on this disc.

As can often be the case with discs made primarily for virtuoso effect and the white-knuckle ride of listening to it, it has been recorded closely, with a resulting sound that becomes relentless quickly. That is more of a shame with this performance than it might be with others, as this is the sort of recital disc whose attention to detail and technical polish has the strength to bear minutely close examination on complete listenings. **Caroline Gill**

John Adams

James McCarthy celebrates that rare beast – a composer who writes music that is enjoyed by the critics and the public alike

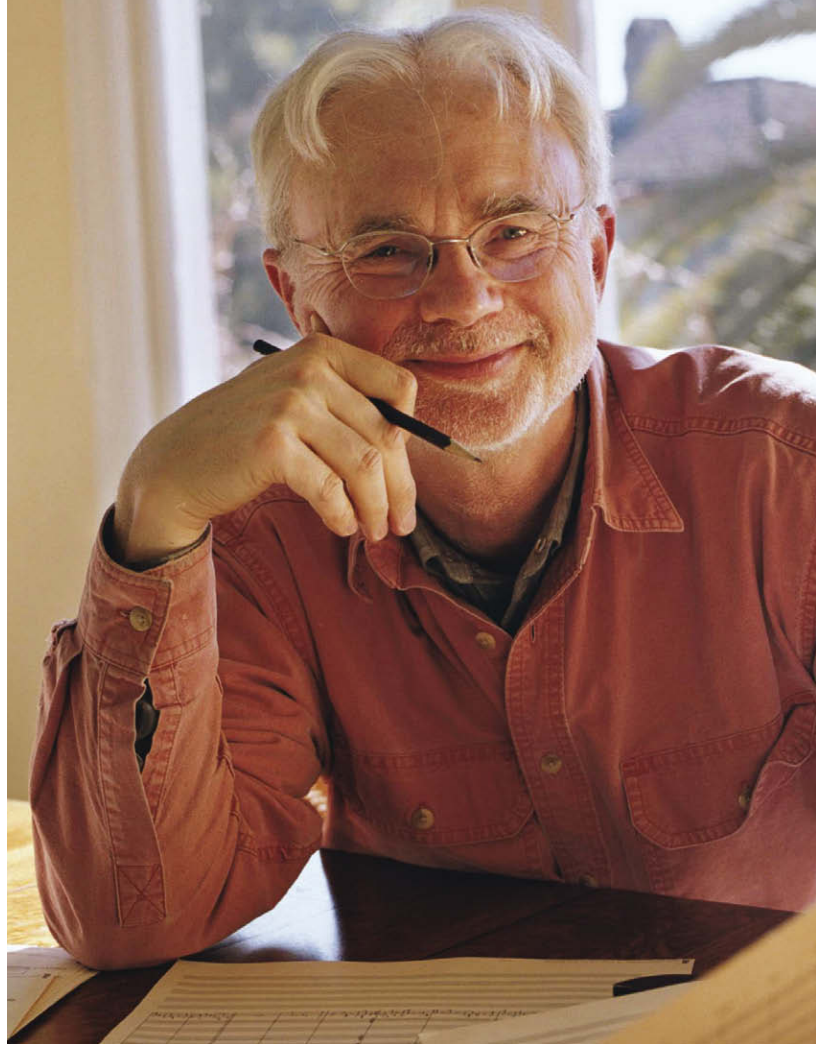
There are those who would have you believe that new music is a battleground – a deeply cratered landscape scarred by musical grenades flung by vengeful composers seeking with each new piece to finally silence all of their contemporaries who dare to have a different aesthetic outlook to their own. It's all 'isms' and 'schools of composition' and 'music's true path'. And of course it's utter nonsense and drivel. Don't believe a word of it.

Enter John Adams (b1947). Having never been a composer who felt the need to conform to anyone else's idea of the kind of music he *should* be writing, Adams is consequently one of the most performed composers of concert music today. In 2014 alone, seven of his stage works were performed in venues ranging from the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris to the Metropolitan Opera in New York. I should like to focus on the music Adams produced from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, the works that established and sealed his reputation as the leading American composer of his generation. This was the period in which what is now regarded as the classic Adams style emerged, with earth-shaking pedal points, glittering woodwind filigree and constant pulsation. The works include the mesmerising solo piano piece *Phrygian Gates* (1977), the electrifying, twitchy *Shaker Loops* (1978), the irreverent and

'Adams is a restlessly inventive composer, one who builds the language and form of every new piece from scratch'

beguiling *Grand Pianola Music* (1982), the epic symphonic fantasy of *Harmonium* (1980-81) and *Harmonielebre* (1984-85), and the era-defining opera *Nixon in China* (1985-87). It remains a staggering period of musical productivity even today. It is rare for a living composer to write anything at all that stands a chance of entering the standard repertoire of orchestras and opera companies; during the 1980s Adams seemed to do it as a matter of course.

It was *Harmonium* for choir and orchestra that first woke me up to Adams's music. It featured in *Leaving Home*, Sir Simon Rattle's TV survey of music from the 20th century, and I remember as a teenager being so excited by the shimmering textures and intoxicating pulsation of the third movement (a setting of Emily Dickinson's poem 'Wild Nights', which Adams describes as containing a 'poetic intensity that is at once violent and sexual and full of that longing for forgetfulness which is at the core of all Dickinson's works') that I went to my local library to put in a request to borrow a score of the work. What arrived, two weeks later, was not, in fact, *Harmonium* but the similarly titled but entirely different Adams work *Harmonielebre*, Adams's symphony-in-all-but-name which begins with a volley of piledriving chords from the entire



John Adams: one of the most-performed composers of our time

orchestra before a seemingly endless melodic line unfurls, bathed in shimmering starlight. So that was that; I was hooked.

The BBC's new 'Ten Pieces' scheme, which aims to introduce primary school children to classical music through 10 specially selected pieces (Handel's *Zadok the Priest*, the finale to Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, that sort of thing), includes Adams's exhilarating four-and-a-half-minute fanfare *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* (1986), which is undeniably an attention-seizing place to start exploring Adams's music. Personally, however, I would advise beginning with the third movement of *Harmonielebre*, the fantastically titled 'Meister Eckhart and Quackie'. Of the typically quirky title, Adams explains: 'The Zappaesque title refers to a dream I'd had shortly after the birth of our daughter, Emily, who was briefly dubbed "Quackie" during her infancy. In the dream, she rides perched on the shoulder of the medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart, as they hover among the heavenly bodies like figures painted on the high ceilings of old cathedrals. The tender berceuse gradually picks up speed and mass and culminates in a tidal wave of brass and percussion over a pedal point on E flat major.' There can be few more overwhelming musical climaxes than that which builds into a flooding torrent of sound at the end of this movement. When performed with real passion in a concert hall the experience is literally breathtaking. There are a handful of very good recordings but Rattle's exquisitely detailed account with the CBSO would be my first choice.

Like many young composers starting out, Adams found regular income in academia and taught music at the San Francisco Conservatory from 1972 to 1982. It was while at the Conservatory that Adams composed what he considers

ADAMS FACTS

Born February 15, 1947**Education** Harvard University with Leon Kirchner, Earl Kim, Roger Sessions, Harold Shapero and David Del Tredici**Career** Music teacher at San Francisco Conservatory (1972-82); composer (to present)**Breakthrough work** Harmonium (premiered April 15, 1981)**Definitive work** Nixon in China (premiered October 22, 1987)**Alex Ross on Adams** 'The music of John Adams, unlike so much classical composition of the last 50 years, has the immediate power to enchant'**Adams on music** 'Music is above and beyond all else the marriage of form and feeling.' 'Complexity as progress' is in fact a posture, an intellectual house of cards, and always has been.'

his true 'Opus 1', *Phrygian Gates*. In this 22-minute work for solo piano, the idea that would fuel all of his works in the following decade

crystallised. He describes the process thus: 'With harmonic rhythm (ie the rate of changes between harmonies) radically slowed down, modulation took on a new and exciting meaning and I found that, when properly handled, it could accomplish the effect of a kind of celestial gear shifting.' The process is essentially a kind of musical delayed gratification. Think of Ravel's *Boléro*. Philip Clark (in his *Gramophone* 'Collection' article on Ravel's masterpiece in the Awards 2010 issue) wrote, 'after cruising in C major for 15 minutes, Ravel slips the harmonic gearstick up into E, causing a jolt that refuels his narrative and readies listeners for that crash-land climax. Ravel teases the senses. His nuances of orchestration and harmony only taste as pungent as they do because there's nothing else to listen to.' The same process is at work in all of these early Adams scores. Part of the reason that Adams is capable of such extreme harmonic stretching is because, like Ravel, he is a master orchestrator, a true craftsman.

In the mid-1980s, when the maverick director Peter Sellars suggested that he should write an opera about President Nixon's visit to China in 1972, Adams was initially cool on the idea. It was only when Alice Goodman agreed to write a libretto in couplets that Adams started to take the project seriously. *Nixon in China* was Adams's first stage work, and he readily concedes that he isn't an opera-goer, yet it has become one of the most widely performed new operas of the last 40 years – it could even claim to be the most-performed American opera of all, but don't quote me on that. There are several standout moments in *Nixon*; but to get an immediate feel for the work, zoom in to the arias 'News has a kind of mystery' (Act 1 scene 1), 'This is prophetic' (the repeated words 'Bless this union with

all its might / Let it remain inviolate' at the end of this aria – particularly as performed by Carolann Page as Pat Nixon in the original recording conducted by Edo de Waart – are chilling in the extreme; Act 2 scene 1) and the grandstanding, buccaneering 'I am the wife of Mao Tse-tung' (Act 2 scene 2).

By restricting my focus only on the music that Adams composed from his mid-thirties to his mid-forties I have left a great many superb works untouched. For instance, the Violin Concerto from 1993, which won the world's biggest prize for composition, the Grawemeyer Award (try Chloë Hanslip's account on Naxos, which Philip Clark labeled 'the sort of performance that secures a reputation for life'), or *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* from 2012, the premiere recording of which (conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on DG) was shortlisted for a *Gramophone* Award last year. The music that Adams has composed since 1990 is generally more rhythmically and harmonically volatile, as if he is kicking against the widely imitated style of those popular early works.

Adams is a restlessly inventive composer, one who builds the language and form of every new piece from scratch rather than relying on gestures or harmonic and melodic 'moves' that have worked well in the past. In his memoir, *Hallelujah Junction*, Adams writes about the painful nature of his creative process: 'On a dark day I will become nearly overwhelmed at how little I have mastered in my life. Starting a new piece can cause me torment and can mean having to slog through a dismal swamp of indifferent ideas, pushing them, prodding them, often abandoning them in disgust or desperation.' Let this be a reassurance to any composers reading this who are in the early stages of creating a new work. You are most definitely not alone in your struggles. Keep going.

So there we have it – an entire article about John Adams's early music without a single mention of post-minimalism... oh, blast. **G**

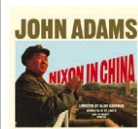
THREE ESSENTIAL ADAMS RECORDINGS

A trio of works that introduce Adams's musical voice

**Harmonielehre**

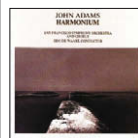
The Chairman Dances. Two Fanfares – Tromba lontana; Short Ride in a Fast Machine **CBSO** / Sir Simon Rattle
EMI © 555051-2 (6/94)

Rattle's account of *Harmonielehre* brims with fascinating details and the climax at the end of the third movement will have you jumping out of your seat

**Nixon in China**

Sols; Chorus and Orchestra of St Luke's / Edo de Waart
Nonesuch © 7559 79177-2 (10/88)

This is the cast that premiered *Nixon* with Houston Grand Opera: James Maddalena as Richard Nixon, Sanford Sylvan as Chou En-lai and the sensational Carolann Page as Pat Nixon. A cheaper alternative is offered by Marin Alsop on Naxos but it doesn't quite have the same electric atmosphere as the original recording.

**Harmonium**

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra / Edo de Waart
ECM New Series © 821 465-2

Harmonium was Adams's first big orchestral commission (from the San Francisco Symphony) and the first time he had written for choir. Which makes the intoxicating power and authority of the composition all the more astonishing.

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Vocal



Richard Wigmore on Schubert from Boesch and Martineau:
'Florian Boesch is in his element railing against an intolerable burden of suffering in "Der Atlas"' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 73**



Fabrice Fitch reviews the final recording from The Hilliards:
'The tone is not so quite so bold now but the interplay between voices is as absorbing as ever' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 80**

JS Bach

Köthener Trauermusik, BWV244a

Sabine Devieille *sop* **Damien Guillon** *countertenor*

Thomas Hobbs *ten* **Christian Immler** *bass*

Ensemble Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon

Harmonia Mundi © HMC90 2211 (74' • DDD)



For Pygmalion's debut disc on Harmonia Mundi – following a small but perfectly

formed legacy of Bach recordings for Alpha – Raphaël Pichon has turned to a work whose music has disappeared but can, to a significant extent, be surmised from extant sources written in the late 1720s. The funeral music for Prince Leopold is thus drawn principally from the *Trauer Ode* and *St Matthew Passion*.

Morgan Jourdain's reconstruction is not the first attempt on disc to imagine the sombre proceedings of November 1728. Andrew Parrott's 2011 version takes a rather different view in both tone and context, not least challenging assumptions of what music might have been sung at which service – burial or memorial – and presenting the post-sermon Dictum with the fugal choral movement of the *Trauer Ode*, while Jourdain is convinced that the second *Kyrie* of the Mass in B minor is the answer.

Striking is the distinction and distinctiveness of the music-making in both readings. If Parrott distils the essence of Bach's musical 'mourning weeds' with profound intimacy and inner coherence, Pichon's vision is more candidly theatrical in projection, grand in concept and more even in the quality of solo vocal work. (It's worth buying the disc just for Damien Guillon's 'Erhalte mich', unsurprisingly set to 'Erbarme dich'). There is a sense, however, that, as each great *St Matthew* number is rolled out, one is dealing in a somewhat discrete set of tableaux; that no original recitatives survive may contribute to this, though Pygmalion's kaleidoscopic vocabulary is nevertheless consistently alluring and the imagery tellingly visceral.

Indeed, the sensibility of Bach's memorial music raises, as Bach presents it 'authentically' in the great *Trauer Ode*, the matter of how performers respond to this particular genre. Perhaps unduly influenced by the gentle gracefulness of Jürgen Jürgens's 1968 recording of the Queen of Poland's elegy, Pygmalion carry over little, in this new memorial canvas, of that reposeful elegance of the movements derived from the *Trauer Ode*. Instead, we have a series of beautifully considered and chiselled set pieces. What we lack is the continuity of reflective sentiment, an incremental sense of unfolding poignancy which Parrott presents so atmospherically.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Selected comparison:

Parrott (12/11) (AVIE) AV2241

Brahms

Fest- und Gedenksprüche, Op 109.

Missa canonica, Op *posth*.

Motets – Op 29; Op 74; Op 110

Swedish Radio Choir / Peter Dijkstra

Channel Classics © CCSSA35814

(58' • DDD/DSD • T)



These relaxed and often sensuous performances seem conceived to support

the view that Brahms's choral style is shaped more by musical convictions than religious ones. Reading the notes of the early Op 29 *Motets* and the *Missa canonica* we may be struck by their old German counterpoint, but the members of the Swedish Radio Choir never let consonants get in the way of a singing line and their technical security is such that a moment of passing struggle for the sopranos on the exposed upper slopes of the *Agnus Dei* comes as a shock.

The two Op 74 *Motets* present a sterner face to us, to say nothing of a test to them, and Peter Dijkstra takes full opportunity of Brahms's block-like episodes to effectively 'stage' 'Warum ist das Licht gegeben' as a

painfully searching journey from Job's despair to the consolation of the Lutheran *Nunc dimittis*. Even in the more straightforward companion-piece, 'O Heiland, reiss hie Himmel auf', Dijkstra draws out the Romantically chromatic harmonies to present Brahms's complex attitude towards his musical heritage and his self-consciously assured place within it. Channel Classics has discreetly managed the warm ambience of a Stockholm Church to allow us within Brahms's textures and Dijkstra ensures the often unusually low bass-lines are firmly projected.

The required strength is there in force for the homophonic and polychoral exclamations of the much later and more anachronistic *Fest- und Gedenksprüche*, Op 109, written for the larger forces and acoustic of Hamburg's Cäcilienverein, but a mark of the disc is how much singing is not merely quiet but glows with a properly interior quality. Such tender attention reveals the Op 110 set as the true sacred counterpart to the late sets of piano pieces, the despair expressed in their texts placed carefully between stout Protestant humility and the bitter resignation of the *Four Serious Songs*, Op 121. Sung texts are printed but no translations. **Peter Quantrill**

Byrd

'Infelix ego'

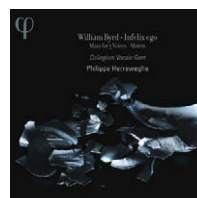
Byrd Ave Maria. *Christe qui lux est*. *Emendemus in melius*. *Infelix ego*. *Mass for Five Voices*

Ferrabosco *Peccantem me quotidie*

De Monte *Miserere mei*

Collegium Vocale Gent / Philippe Herreweghe

PHI © LPH014 (49' • DDD)



Penitence might be the prevailing theme on this disc but there's nothing penitential in

the experience of this exquisite recording. Herreweghe pairs Byrd's Mass for Five Voices and large-scale motet *Infelix ego* with works by Ferrabosco and de Monte – a trio of composers all united, as Andrew

Carwood's booklet-notes remind us, by their Catholic faith. The result is a serious addition to the many fine recordings of this repertoire already available – not least Stile Antico's 'Phoenix Rising' (Harmonia Mundi, 9/13) and Carwood's own Byrd Edition with The Cardinal's Musick, whose last volume (Hyperion, 4/10) was *Gramophone* Recording of the Year in 2010.

The big draw here is *Infelix ego* – Byrd's austere beautiful setting of Savonarola's meditation on the *Miserere*, written while the friar suffered torture at the hands of the Florentine authorities. While The Cardinal's Musick spend themselves almost too soon, so urgent is their musical drama, Herreweghe's singers do more with less, their restraint charged with repressed intensity. Precise tuning and blend support tone so straight it would expose the slightest deviation, vocal simplicity allowing Byrd's craggy lines to speak directly.

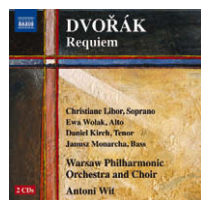
Speeds within the Mass are unusually fast, a little too fast perhaps, clouding details like the delicate syncopation of the *Gloria*, but there's no faulting the fluidity of phrasing. This is a contemporary performance – full forces, mixed voices – that might lack the intimacy of the all-male Cardinal's Musick recording but has a dynamism and clarity of tone that compares favourably with Stile Antico, The Tallis Scholars (Gimell, 5/84) or the rather more pastel-coloured Sixteen (Virgin, 1/91). The de Monte and Ferrabosco works are a bonus, offering a harmonic and textural richness that offsets the austerity of the Byrd we hear here. Musical penitence has rarely been so pleasurable. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Dvořák

Requiem, Op 89 B165

Christiane Libor *sop* Ewa Wolak *contr*

Daniel Kirch *ten* Janusz Monarcha *bass* Warsaw Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra / Antoni Wit
Naxos (B) ② 8 572874/5 (98' • DDD • T/t)



Buoyed by the enthusiastic reception afforded his *Stabat mater* by English choral societies and commissioned to set *The Dream of Gerontius*, Dvořák turned, instead, to the text of the Latin Requiem, producing an even finer work in 1890. First performed in Birmingham to great acclaim the following year it has, in recent years, tended to be eclipsed by the Verdi, which it matches in scope but exceeds in length. It is closer in tradition to Cherubini's model than that of Verdi and happily borrows rhythmic models from Mozart's example.

Despite a few longeurs, Dvořák displays his customary richness of melodic invention, motivic threading, dramatic flair and an extended Romantic orchestra, complete with bass clarinet, harp, organ and tam-tam, all of which are put to effective use. His choral writing – clearly influenced by the prevailing heavy English choral sound – consists of divided male and female sub-choirs and a good deal of homophonic texture; nothing to frighten the natives, therefore. After a relatively tame few minutes it takes a massive choral wall of sound to finally achieve take-off. The Warsaw Philharmonic Choir are in fine collective voice. Their Mozart-influenced 'Confutatis maledictis' is especially vehement. The quartet of soloists are magnificent. In the *Sanctus*, Christiane Libor is utterly magnificent in her soaring 'Pleni sunt caeli' and Janusz Monarcha's fruity, Slavic approach in the 'Recordare' is spot-on.

Orchestrally, this is a stunning performance. Perfectly blended woodwind are clearly focused on a wide-spread bed of strings. The recording is vividly engineered and everyone involved is on top form. A bargain. **Malcolm Riley**

Elgar

'The Binyon Settings'

The Spirit of England, Op 80^a. With Proud Thanksgiving^a. Carillon, Op 75^b. Arthur – incidental music (arr Palmer)^c

^aJudith Howarth *sop* ^bSimon Callow *spkr* ^aLondon Symphony Chorus; ^aPhilharmonia Orchestra;

^bBBC Concert Orchestra; ^cOrchestra of St Paul's / ^cBen Palmer, ^{ab}John Wilson

Somm (F) SOMMCD255 (78' • DDD)



This fascinating CD brings together the collaborations between Elgar and Laurence Binyon – the *Spirit of England* trilogy (performed complete for the first time in 1917), *With Proud Thanksgiving* (a truncated reworking of 'For the Fallen' from *The Spirit of England*), the little-known *Carillon* of 1914 (using Binyon's words rather than the original poem of Emile Cammerts) and the premiere recording of the complete incidental music to Binyon's verse play *Arthur* of 1923.

The fulsome interpretation of the *The Spirit of England* compares well with the three other recordings of the work, by Alexander Gibson, Richard Hickox and David Lloyd-Jones; the Philharmonia Chorus (trained under the sure, sympathetic hand of Simon Halsey) are

GRAMOPHONEDe Archive

Byrd's Mass for Five Voices

Three recordings that came before Philippe Herreweghe's and how Gramophone rated them



JUNE 1960

Byrd Mass for Five Voices

Choir of King's College,
Cambridge / David Willcocks

Argo (F) ZRG5226 (12in • 30s)

The performance of the Mass is a beautiful example of the sensitive and deeply musical singing that we have come to expect from King's College Choir. There is admirable definition in the individual parts, and an overall blend of tone that comes more from perfect internal matching of tone-colour than from any phoney mike-juggling. I really thought I was in the ante-Chapel, with the flickering candles and the choir just visible through the screen. Willcocks shapes the Mass with great skill and sympathy, bringing out Byrd's logical yet luscious lines to perfection. The boys sing cleanly and with excellent intonation, and the altos and basses are first-rate. *Denis Stevens*



DECEMBER 1990

Byrd Mass for Five Voices

Christ Church Cathedral Choir /
Stephen Darlington

Nimbus (F) NI5237 (52' • DDD • T/t)

Here we have the archetypal English sound and approach – that is, the sound that you might expect to hear today if you stepped inside almost any Anglican cathedral up and down the country, with sweet-toned (if slightly breathy) boys on the top line and countertenors soaring perilously just below them. I would describe it as a 'lazy' sound, not because the members of Christ Church Cathedral Choir are not making an effort (indeed, they are clearly singing their hearts out), but because it is slow to speak, swift to fade and, at times, fails to gather the sense of momentum that can make this exquisite polyphony so compelling. *Tess Knighton*



JULY 1993

Byrd Mass for Five Voices

Oxford Camerata /
Jeremy Summerly

Naxos (S) 8 550574 (65' • DDD)

The singers are a young group with boundless energy – indeed, so much so that they need curbing in the louder passages, where their tone roughens unduly. They are best in their calmer moments, as in the *Agnus Dei* of the five-part Mass. I would, however, warmly recommend this disc to anyone wishing for a first tasting of this music.

Mary Berry

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in fine voice and there is a muscular *Schwung* to the playing under John Wilson's direction. While *With Proud Thanksgiving* has a less profound musical impact than *For the Fallen*, its connection with the burial of the Unknown Warrior in November 1920 leaves a stirring impression in the mind. It is good to hear a new recording of *Carillon* with Simon Callow as reciter, whose controlled enunciation seems to blend so well with Elgar's score (just as it did in Chandos's fine recording of *The Starlight Express* in 2012).

The recording of the whole of the incidental score to *Arthur*, however, is a real eye-opener. Here Elgar's detailed and careful score (which, at least for me, categorically gainsays the idea of the post-1920 Elgar as bereft of invention), with its original 'pit band' instrumentation, lends the music an intimate sense of authenticity. Full marks to Somm for generously informative booklet-notes and a most enterprising project. **Jeremy Dibble**

Spirit of England – selected comparisons:

SNO, Gibson (5/77⁸, 6/84⁸, 11/92) (CHAN) CHAN6574

LSO, Hickox (1/89⁸, 5/96) (EMI) 503603-2

BBC SO, Lloyd-Jones (2/07) (DUTT) CDLX7172

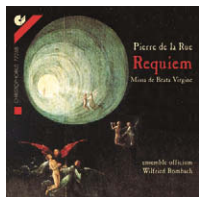
La Rue

Missa pro defunctis. Missa de Beata Virgine

Ensemble Officium / Wilfried Rombach

Christophorus © CHR77386 (60' • DDD)

Recorded 2002. From CHR77268



Since this recording was first issued in 2004 there have been at least two new

recordings of La Rue's Requiem, by The Clerks' Group and Cappella Pratensis, alongside of which the performance of Ensemble Officium could be considered a touch safe. The sound of their mixed voices is great and the balance very good. Moreover, they tackle the tricky problem of ranges and transpositions in a sensible and musically attractive manner.

On the other hand, La Rue's *De Beata Virgine* Mass appears not to have been recorded otherwise (like a fair number of La Rue's 30-odd Masses). And it is very good to have it in a performance in which everything fits beautifully together, everything is absolutely clear to the ear, and – once again – the sound is great. Here they introduce chant Propers between the movements of the Ordinary, sung by women only (which is an odd choice, though it sounds good and works nicely). As so often, I tend personally to regret the

inclusion of so much chant but no Preface to precede the *Sanctus*, since the *Sanctus*, like the *Gloria* and *Credo*, begins in the middle of a sentence.

As before, the note informs us more about the chapel of Frederick the Wise in Wittenberg rather than the Burgundian ducal chapel where La Rue worked; but that is partly to draw attention to La Rue's wide international resonance, about which we know largely from the magnificent Wittenberg choirbooks, now in Jena.

David Fallows

Missa pro defunctis – selected comparisons:

Clerks' Group, Wickham (2/06) (GAUD) CDGAU352

Cappella Pratensis, Bull (7/12) (CHAL) CC72541

Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde

Christa Ludwig contr Waldemar Kmentt ten

Vienna Symphony Orchestra / Carlos Kleiber

Wiener Symphoniker © WSO07 (58' • ADD)

Recorded live, June 7, 1967



In *Conversations with Carlos*, Charles Barber describes the singular record of

Kleiber conducting Mahler as 'invaluable'. It's a word I'd more readily apply to his book than this performance, which is so wretchedly recorded that only a small fraction of what Kleiber may have done with the piece is appreciable, and no larger a fraction in this first 'official' release, which is recognisably from the same tape as its previous appearances on CD.

Waldemar Kmentt is able to disguise either lack of sympathy or familiarity by shouting his way through the first song – whether Kleiber is tweaking the orchestral balances to help him must remain an open question – but he blunders like the proverbial bull through the porcelain world of 'Von der Jugend'; and although the audio dentists have done infill work on the crumbly gaps in the texture, removed some radio signal and tidied up a few noises off, they have thickened Kmentt's already overbearing presence in the process.

Anyway, no amount of expensive restoration will disguise a lack of orchestral coordination, surprising given the frequency with which the VSO had played the work during the previous decade but which may be set down to fatigue. This is detailed by the booklet-note, which goes on to record how the various diametrically opposed critical reactions to the performance at the time produce 'a zero-sum game'. Apparently Kleiber took over from an ailing Josef Krips for a concert in

the middle of the three-week Wiener Festwochen celebrating the centenary of Mahler's birth. He had four rehearsals, the same as everyone else. This is not quite the tale told by Barber, who has Kleiber beetling off to Klemperer for Mahlerian advice late in 1966. So does Heyworth's Klemperer biography.

As can happen in *Das Lied*, the performance gradually finds its feet. Kmentt finds a version of *mezza voce* for 'The Drunkard in Spring', while Kleiber communicates tempo shifts that are more than wrenching on the gears. Which brings us to Christa Ludwig. Her experience in performance must have had an inestimable value compared to any words of advice; her shaping of the text leads all that is best about the performance. Magnificent as she is, her concerts and recordings with Klemperer, Reiner and Karajan offer more wholly engrossing experiences. **Peter Quanttrill**

Mascagni

Messa di Gloria

Iorio Zennaro ten Pietro Spagnoli bass

Ensemble Seicentonovecento / Flavio Colusso

Brilliant Classics © 94943 (51' • DDD)

Recorded 1991



Pietro Mascagni's work on his *Messa di Gloria* was interrupted in 1887

by his commission to write *Cavalleria rusticana*. Although it would be wrong to suggest that there are any direct references or borrowings of material between the two pieces (the Mass, at the very least, does not represent the best of Mascagni's work in the way *Cavalleria* does), there is much of the rollicking spirit of the opera running through the *Messa di Gloria*. To that end, it is a piece wholly characteristic of Mascagni's joyful style, and Flavio Colusso and his long-established Ensemble Seicentonovecento perform it as such, presenting a recording that is so unassailably enjoyable that it is hard not to be uplifted by its every element. Recorded in conditions that are anything but liturgical, there is much concert-hall space and air around the expansive sound, in true Italian style. It also finds its soloists at their best, with their concentration on perfect tuning and timing with the orchestra not for a second detracting from their quintessentially throwaway operatic Italianateness.

Ultimately, this disc is an unfortunate combination of angelic, mellifluous strings and a dark, cadaverous choral sound that is



Formidably accomplished: Solistenensemble Phønix16 and their conductor Timo Kreuser bring extreme skill to sacred music by Dariusz Przybylski (see page 73)

remarkably difficult to listen to. There is little competition for recordings of this piece, though, and that the solo passages are as extensive as they are is as good a reason as any to favour this recording over any that has gone before, despite its choral shortcomings. **Caroline Gill**

C Matthews

Aftertones^a. Crossing the Alps^b. No Man's Land^c

^aIan Bostridge ^{ten} ^aRoderick Williams ^{bar}

Hallé ^aChoir, ^bYouth Choir and ^cOrchestra /

^{ac}Nicholas Collon, ^bRichard Wilberforce

Hallé © CDHLL7538 (61' • DDD • T)



The Hallé's association with Colin Matthews continues. *Aftertones*

(2000) was a commission from the Huddersfield Choral Society, these 'Three Landscapes of Edmund Blunden' seeking to underline the poet's mingled evocations of war and peace – ranging from the anguish of 'Estrangement', via the sombre equivocation of 'Aftermath' then an affecting interlude for strings and harp, to the relative consolation in 'Death of Childhood Beliefs'. Both choir and

orchestra manage gainfully with music whose earnest sincerity does not avoid a degree of turgidity prior to the resigned yet soulful ending.

Matthews's choral writing is heard to greater advantage in *Crossing the Alps* (2009). Its text, drawing on Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, deals with the liberation of the imagination in an eight-part texture which lucidly conveys the piece's essentially humanist message (complementing that of Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony with which it was coupled at its first performance). Much the most distinctive work here, however, is *No Man's Land* (2011) – less a song-cycle than a vocal scena in which tenor and baritone assume the roles of Captain and Sergeant, as their bodies lie rotting on barbed wire. Christopher Reid's text takes in elements of dialogue as well as arias that incorporate songs and marches from the First World War, while extracts from recordings made a century ago add a discreet veneer of authenticity to proceedings.

Ian Bostridge and Roderick Williams are sensitive exponents of this unlikely yet thought-provoking piece, while Nicholas Collon secures a committed response in both of the large-scale works. The composer's own notes succinctly and

informatively fill out the context.

Richard Whitehouse

Orff

Carmina Burana

Yeree Suh ^{sop} Yves Saelens ^{ten} Thomas Bauer ^{bar}

Collegium Vocale Gent; Cantate Domino;

Anima Eterna Brugge / Jos van Immerseel

Zig-Zag Territoires © ZZT353 (64' • DDD • T/t)



It was inevitable that a ripe choral warhorse such as *Carmina Burana*

should now be worthy of a reassessment in terms of 'authentic' performance, 1937-style, that is. Jos van Immerseel commands a cohort of 115 musicians, including the 38 singers of Collegium Vocale Gent, the boys' choir Cantate Domino and his Anima Eterna orchestra of Bruges, the latter a relatively small band, with fewer desks of strings than in a full symphony orchestra, thereby allowing him to focus on Orff's highly colourful writing for wind and percussion. The strings play on gut strings, which immediately imparts a much more rustic quality to the sound. The flutes' flutter-



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tonguing has never been caught so vividly on disc and the hiccuping principal bassoon lurches about with an enchanting freedom.

Soprano Yeree Suh soars beautifully throughout and tenor Yves Saelens's interpretation of the spit-roasted swan is graceful and articulate. However, it lacks something of Andrew Kennedy's 'seering lyricism', as I termed it in my review of the LPO recording, for which this role cries out. Congratulations, though, to the baritone, Thomas Bauer, who savours every moment of his multifaceted part, whether as the gruff boozier, the unbuttoned lech or the falsetto'd eunuch. The main chorus is on tip-top form; crisp, full-blooded and beautifully blended singing and, despite being leaner in numbers, still able to pack a punch. Only *in extremis* do they struggle within the audio mix to cut through the full *fortissimo* might of the brass and percussion.

Despite the slightly vague sound of the boys' chorus, this naturalistic, primitive interpretation is a resounding success. Van Immerseel and his musicians have a winner here with this sparkling new release.

Malcolm Riley

Selected comparisons:

LPO, *Graf* (5/14) (LPO) LPO0076

Przybylski

Passio. ...et desiderabunt mori... Miserere

Solistenensemble Phoenix16 / Timo Kreuser

Dux ② DUX1119/20 (153' • DDD)



Born in Poland in 1984, Dariusz Przybylski studied in Germany with York

Höller and Wolfgang Rihm; this recording was made in Berlin by a vocal ensemble with whom Przybylski spent a year (2012-13) as composer-in-residence.

Passio et Mors Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Secundum Ioannem (2013) for 12 voices, to give the work its full title, was presumably the main result of that residency and its *a cappella* style is closer to that of other relatively austere Passion settings – Arvo Pärt's, for example – than to the overtly dramatic idiom of James MacMillan's *St John Passion* (2008) for solo baritone, larger and smaller choruses and orchestra. 'Holy minimalism' will not do as a label for Przybylski's work, however. Although its atmosphere is ritualistically intense and it moves slowly, with only the rarest hints of animation, its harmony is too unstable to sink into stagnation and its use of several different

languages also distances it from any more obviously liturgical precursors.

The booklet-notes by conductor Timo Kreuser spell out the music's modal construction, explaining its rootedness as well as its ability to deal in predominantly dissonant sonorities and canonic manoeuvres sustained to achieve a hypnotically restrained effect. Some passages reinforce their meditative aura so determinedly that they risk an overly passive mode of expression; even the extended setting of the *Stabat mater* seems more consolatory than mournful, and the music reaches out most powerfully to the listener when a more expressionistic quality is allowed to emerge.

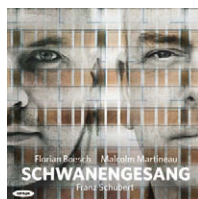
It's possible that the mesmerising avoidance of straightforward melodic writing found in Ligeti's choral works has left a trace in Przybylski's music, coupled with a resistance to the forthright melodramatics of Penderecki's *St Luke Passion*. *Passio* and the two shorter accompanying items seem almost obsessively concerned with constraining technical routines, yet the result is far from dull or monochrome and the performances are formidably accomplished. The recordings, made in Berlin's St Thomas Aquinas Catholic Academy, have a degree of resonance that creates the illusion of voices turning into sustaining instruments – strings, brass – from time to time. That effect adds to the music's persuasiveness, heightening one's curiosity about the composer's work in other media.

Arnold Whittall

Schubert

Schwanengesang, D957. Gesänge des Harfners (Harfenspieler) – D478; D479; D480. Grenzen der Menschheit, D716. Prometheus, D674

Florian Boesch bar **Malcolm Martineau** pf
Onyx ③ ONYX4131 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Florian Boesch is never a singer to take for granted. In *Schwanengesang* he changes the (posthumously) published order of both the Rellstab and Heine groups so that each charts a gradually darkening landscape. There is no place for the charming, wistful 'Die Taubenpost'. But then charm is not Boesch's way. In songs that call for a smile in the tone he sounds nonchalant, almost detached, bending rhythms, shortening sustained notes and sometimes resorting to a conversational *parlando*. I hear neither roguishness nor amorous yearning in 'Das

IN THE STUDIO

An inside view of who's before the mics and what they're recording

• Divine Art Bach

Maltese pianist **Lucia Micallef** has been busy recording Bach's keyboard concertos (BWV1052, 1054, 1056 and 1058) with the European Union Chamber Orchestra under conductor Brian Schembri. Divine Art will release the recordings in the spring.

• Marshall from Manchester

Also on Divine Art, this time on the label's Métier imprint, tenor **James Gilchrist** has joined cellist Tim Smedley and a quartet from the Manchester Chamber Ensemble to record songs and chamber works by Plymouth-born composer Nicholas Marshall. The disc will be released later this year.



• Discovering Sacheverell Coke

British pianist **Simon Callaghan** (above) will release a disc of piano music by British composer Roger Sacheverell Coke in May. Callaghan was drawn to the late-Romantic composer's 'attention to detail' and 'unique musical language'. His disc of Coke's 24 Preludes, Opp 33 & 34, and 15 Variations and Finale, Op 37, will be issued on Somm.

• Birmingham Barber

Following their Editor's Choice recording of choral works by Herbert Howells (12/14), the **Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber Choir** and conductor Paul Spicer have glanced across the Atlantic to record a disc of choral works by Samuel Barber. Somm will release 'The Choral music of Samuel Barber' in May.

• Dido in Kilburn

The **Armonico Consort** spent a few days at St Augustine's Church in Kilburn at the end of last year, taping Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas* as a follow-up to their recording of *The Fairy Queen*. Soloists included Elin Manahan Thomas, and the disc will be released on Signum Classics later this year.

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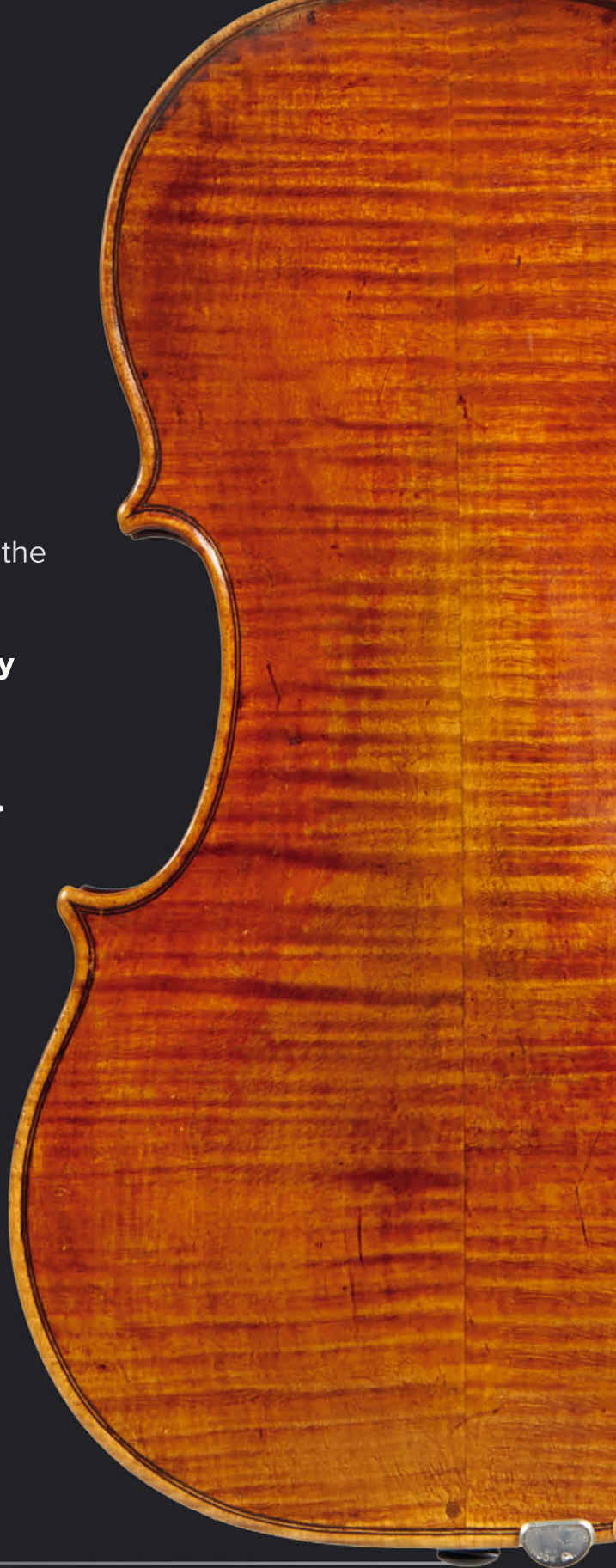
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Fischermädchen'. In 'Ständchen' he makes the most casual, laid-back of seducers.

The songs of loss and alienation that predominate are a different matter. I would still have preferred a truer *legato* in 'Ihr Bild' and 'Am Meer'. But abetted by Malcolm Martineau's imaginative, clean-textured playing, Boesch unfurls his full expressive and dynamic range to compelling effect. At a mobile tempo, 'In der Ferne' has a grand, arching sweep, building surely to a searing climax, while 'Kriegers Ahnung' encompasses sombre foreboding, tenderness and, finally, numb desolation. Boesch is in his element railing against an intolerable burden of suffering in 'Der Atlas' (the dotted bass ostinato etched in granite by Martineau). And few recorded performances of 'Die Stadt' and 'Der Doppelgänger' since Fischer-Dieskau can match Boesch's haunted intensity, the latter climaxing in a lacerating, horrified 'meine eigene Gestalt'.

The Goethe settings are also well suited to Boesch's temperament and colouristic range. For the doleful meditations of the blind old Harper he finds a blanched, abstracted tone. He sneers and taunts without melodrama in 'Prometheus', Goethe's bitter denunciation of theocratic tyranny, and distils a mingled humility and gravitas in its philosophical antithesis, 'Grenzen der Menschheit', enhanced by the firm resonance of his low notes. Boesch's almost expressionist style is certainly controversial in Schubert. But at his best he and Martineau can convince you that, for the moment, theirs is the only way. **Richard Wigmore**

Tallis

'Ave, rosa sine spinis'

Mass for Four Voices. Ave, rosa sine spinis. Blessed be thy name. Euge caeli porta. In manus tuas, Domine. Laudate Dominum. Miserere nostri. O come in one to praise the Lord. O salutaris hostia. Salvator mundi II. Te lucis ante terminum - I; II. When Jesus went into Simon the Pharisee's house. Why fum'th in fight. Wipe away my sins

The Cardinal's Musick / Andrew Carwood
Hyperion © CDA68076 (74' • DDD • T/t)



This very enjoyable series continues its sequence of motets and hymns, with a

Mass as the centerpiece – this time the setting for four voices, the most direct and pared down of Tallis's output. It is instructive to compare this new recording with The Hilliard Ensemble's some

25 years ago, for the two could hardly be more different. The Hilliards sing one to a part and in a recessed acoustic that blunts their incisive approach; The Cardinal's Musick sing as a choir but their sound is compact in a different way (notably more relaxed), and the sound recording suits them better. The *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* are perhaps overly reverential: here I prefer The Hilliards' approach, which emphasises the cycle's continuity. But in other respects, The Cardinal's Musick give a very well-judged account of one of Tallis's most economical works.

The Mass is a world away from the votive antiphon, exemplified here by the early *Ave, rosa sine spinis*. A touch formulaic in places, it is nonetheless worth hearing, for it shows off the ensemble's more athletic side. For the rest, there are splendid performances here: with *O salutaris hostia*, *Laudate Dominum* and *Euge caeli porta* the composer is in his essential idiom, to which The Cardinal's Musick respond with poise and precision; and they are equally at home in the settings from Archbishop Parker's psalter, where a forthright unanimity is required. A very welcome issue, then; and it's always nice to know that there's more to come. **Fabrice Fitch**

Mass – selected comparison:

Hilliard Ens (4/88) (ECM) 833 308-2

Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Krassimira Stoyanova sop Marina Prudenskaja

mez Saimir Pirgu ten Orlin Anastassov bar

Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Mariss Janssons

BR-Klassik (M) ② 900126 (86' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie im Gasteig, Munich, October 10 & 11, 2013

Verdi

Messa da Requiem

Krassimira Stoyanova sop Marina Prudenskaja

mez Saimir Pirgu ten Orlin Anastassov bar

Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra / Mariss Janssons

ArtHaus Musik (F) DVD 102 205; (F) Blu-ray 108 136

(91' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Musikverein, Vienna, 2013



Brahms believed that Hans von Bülow 'disgraced himself for all time' by lampooning this work as 'opera in church clothing'. Nonetheless, at least on disc,

there do seem to have been three basic kinds of performances of 'the Mass', as Verdi called it – (1) the operatic, or those with a good sense of theatre; (2) the 'classical', often those aiming not to be (1); and (3) The Big Occasion General Musikdirektor-on-duty approach, ie wanting to be at an imaginary Alexandra Palace with a choir of many hundreds using the text in a stiff, Victorian manner. I'd put the Toscaninis, Muti/Philharmonia and Bernstein into category (1), the Giulinis, Pappano and Colin Davis into (2) and the Karajans (with the exception of some of the early Zadek/Christoff recording) into (3).

You may imagine Jansons coming to the work under category (3) in his well-set career sequence of perform/record major repertoire. But, although he has done little opera, his evident love of musical drama takes him often into category (1). Like many of those performances (and completely opposite to, say, Giulini or Davis), his Requiem is a series of *coups d'état* in which the returns of the actual 'Dies irae' or the launch of 'Rex tremendae majestatis' are exciting aural shocks. He also devotes much time to enjoying slow quiet endings of movements for emotional effect. I don't know whether Jansons is any more of a strict church believer than Verdi was but he represents wholeheartedly the text and its inspiration.

The five days' live work in Munich from which the CD is drawn and the concert in Vienna's Musikverein (DVD) are separated by some days. Taking the temperature of the patient on the road, so to speak, is a smart idea in an age where major concert programmes tour as much as stage productions. In Vienna the soloists in particular are listening to each other better (the women in the 'Recordare'), the tenor is pushing less and the bass sounds happier with his vocal role of God-like chastiser. It's also clearer seeing her that Prudenskaja's pressing on the mezzo's musical line is for dramatic effect. The choir (prepared by Michael Gläser) is superb from its quiet but very clear beginning onwards. The DVD is the version to go for from this pair of releases. It's atmospherically filmed without encompassing an architectural tour of the venue and points intelligently to vocal and instrumental leads.

This new interpretation is both exciting and moving. From the huge list of audio and visual alternatives don't forget the 'official' NBC Toscanini, the Muti/Philharmonia (whose thumping 'Dies irae' was a close rival), the Bernstein/LSO adventure (intriguing soloists) or the fiery Gardiner/ORR (orchestral detail well caught), and hope someone will release the

Colin Davis takeover Prom that served to honour both Solti and Princess Diana.

Mike Ashman

Selected comparisons:

NBC SO, *Toscanini* (12/56⁸) (RCA) GD60299

LSO, *Bernstein* (11/70⁸) (SONY) SM2K47639

ORR, *Gardiner* (4/95⁸) (DG) 479 1044GB30

Philb Orch, *Muti* (7/96⁸) (EMI) 098020-2 or 586239-2

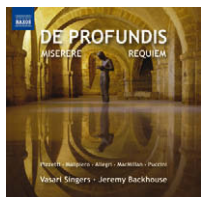
'De profundis'

Allegri Miserere MacMillan Miserere Malipiero

De profundis **Pizzetti** De profundis. Messa di Requiem **Puccini** Requiem

Vasari Singers / Jeremy Backhouse

Naxos © 8 573196 (70' • DDD • T/T)



The thesis of this disc isn't a new one but it is always a welcome approach and has been originally addressed. It couples two settings of three texts – the *De profundis*, the *Miserere* and the Requiem – in contrasting pairs. The most startling contrast, surprisingly, does not involve the only non-Italian piece on the disc – James MacMillan's *Miserere*, commissioned in 2009 by The Sixteen as a companion to the Allegri – but the two Requiems, which were written close to each other in time but differ so totally in outlook, both stylistically and in length, that they provide testament to the intelligence of the programming.

One of the most notable characteristics of such accomplished amateur choirs is that, although they can often lack the final polish of professional ensembles, there is nevertheless a strong sense of commitment to the sound that can surpass that of their full-time counterparts. And so it is here – the tuning is not always perfect and there are occasionally some standout voices (particularly from the back rows) that interfere with the blend – but that is ultimately forgivable solely on the basis that their corporate engagement with the music and the overall sound is so tangible in their performance. In the Italian pieces that can sometimes be at the expense of the breezy operatic sound that they really need; but the close recording of the full-choir passages supports a warm, broad sound that more than does an English style of justice to those Italianate pieces. And the audible corporate breathing in the choir that is particularly noticeable in the Allegri is (almost) silent testament to the greatness of English choirs. **Caroline Gill**

'I dilettanti'

Astorga In queste amene selve **Benedetti** La

Gelosia **Bigaglia** Più ch'io cerco del mio bene

Maccari Non mi si dica più **B Marcello** Lucrezia **Ruggieri** Armida abbandonata - Deh m'adita, ò bella Dea; Vinto son della mia fede

Xavier Sabata *counterten*

Latinitas Nostra / Markellos Chryssicos *hpd*

Aparté © APO93 (59' • DDD)



This has a genuinely interesting concept: music for alto voice and basso continuo

by six accomplished 'dilettante' composers, some of whom were aristocrats or professional men who composed and performed simply out of artistic and philological inclinations. Some don't fit the profile perfectly: Giacomo Maccari was a paid tenor at St Mark's from about 1720; his *Non mi si dica più* is performed by Xavier Sabata and the continuo trio of Latinitas Nostra with complete emotional commitment and dramatic directness, albeit not without a few exaggerated solecisms.

Baron Emanuele d'Astorga eventually inherited his Sicilian family's title and estates in 1714, and later held official positions in Spain; the melancholic centrepiece of *In queste amene selve* is performed sweetly by Sabata, Theodoros Kitsos (theorbo), Iason Ioannou (cello) and Markellos Chryssicos (harpisichord). Other bona fide dilettanti include Giovanni Maria Ruggieri, whose music strongly influenced Vivaldi's *Gloria* settings; Sabata has sourced continuo-only accompaniment versions of two arias from Ruggieri's popular Venetian opera *Armida abbandonata* (produced numerous times between 1707 and 1715) from a manuscript in the British Library, and the gentle 'Vinto son della mia fede' shows the countertenor's singing at its most tenderly persuasive, accompanied weightlessly by just theorbo and cello. *Più ch'io cerco del mio bene* reveals that Diogenio Bigaglia, Benedictine prior of San Giorgio Maggiore, composed prettily melodic ideas, to which Latinitas Nostra add some strange *pizzicato* interludes that insinuate the Venetian *villota*. A more familiar nobleman dilettante is Benedetto Marcello, who served the Venetian Republic variously as a magistrate, governor and financial officer – but was also an inquisitive composer whose *Lucrezia* is a tautly dramatic conclusion to this fascinating anthology. **David Vickers**

'Far Away'

Barber *Mélodies passagères*, Op 27 **Beethoven**

An die ferne Geliebte, Op 98 **Britten** Seven

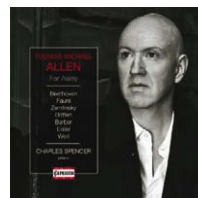
Sonnets of Michelangelo, Op 22 **Eisler**

Hollywood Liederbuch **Fauré** Cinq Melodies 'de

Venise', Op 58 **Weill** Street Scene - Lonely House. Lady in the Dark - My Ship. Love Life - Here I'll Stay **Zemlinsky** Walzergesänge nach toskanischen Liedern, Op 6

Thomas Michael Allen *ten* **Charles Spencer** *pf*

Capriccio © C5194 (78' • DDD)



Young Peter Pears comes to mind (not always happily) during this recital that finds

tenor Thomas Michael Allen out of his Baroque opera element and in a wide range of vocal and dramatic thickets that he navigates with variable success. His upper range is distinctively coloured but his middle voice sounds fragile, even unsupported, and the lower range can be almost completely devoid of tension.

Such problems matter less when Allen is engaged by the texts of Britten's *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* (with music playing to young Pears's limited strengths at that stage in his vocal career) and, later in the recital, in selections from Eisler's *Hollywood Songbook*. Comparisons in the Zemlinsky *Walzergesänge* with the more vocally solid Teodora Gheorghiu (Aparté, 9/13) show how the less imposing Allen can bring the listener closer to the song if only because there's less voice acting as a medium between audience and composer. That's also somewhat the case with Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, an important but slender composition that benefits from not being oversold by a larger voice.

Less fortunately, the Fauré set sounds self-conscious; and as good as it is to hear Barber's seldom-sung *Mélodies passagères*, Allen's careful enunciation and vocalism impose a sameness on every phrase. His attacks have very little variation and tend to be uniformly soft, never really announcing a phrase. In the trio of Kurt Weill Broadway songs, one need not be attached to high-octave voices like Liza Minnelli's to be puzzled over Allen's blandness. Was he connecting at all with what he was singing? Pianist Charles Spencer does, with some particularly sympathetic work in the Britten, also adapting so skilfully to the Beethoven cycle you wonder if he'd switched to fortepiano. **David Patrick Stearns**

'Flowers of the Field'

G Butterworth A Shropshire Lad - Rhapsody

Finzi Requiem da camera^a **Gurney** The

Trumpet^b **Vaughan Williams** An Oxford Elegy^c

^a**Roderick Williams** *bar*^b**Jeremy Irons** *spkr*

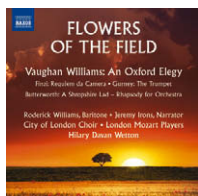
^{abc}**City of London Choir; London Mozart Players /**

Hilary Davan Wetton

Naxos © 8 573426 (61' • DDD • T)



Absolute professional: Xavier Sabata unearths music by 'dilettante' composers of the 1700s and endows much of it with persuasive tenderness



The centenary of the outbreak of the First World War has not gone unmarked in the record industry. In the clamour of new releases I hope that this thoughtful collage of English works for chorus and orchestra doesn't get lost.

Hilary Davan Wetton conducts the City of London Choir and the London Mozart Players in a programme whose chief interests are 'premiere' recordings of Finzi's *Requiem da camera* and Ivor Gurney's chorus-song *The Trumpet* – new performing editions and reconstructions by Christian Alexander and Philip Lancaster respectively. These are framed by Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad* rhapsody and Vaughan Williams's *An Oxford Elegy*.

Both new editions have their challenges; Lancaster must imagine an orchestral sound world Gurney barely discovered for himself, while Alexander must exceed the merits of the original Philip Thomas orchestration, so memorably captured on the Hickox recording (Chandos, 3/92). Lancaster amplifies Gurney's chamber textures into fuller forces that borrow from

Parry and Elgar, colouring ever-present strings with thrilling flashes of brass. Alexander, exchanging Thomas's consoling flute for anguished oboe in 'Only a man', finds greater yearning – a bittersweet nostalgia matched by Roderick Williams's solo, which eschews the declamatory intensity of Stephen Varcoe's for something more inward. This is a work that deserves attention: if not quite the equal of Vaughan Williams's *Dona nobis pacem*, then certainly a youthful glance in that direction.

Jeremy Irons makes an understated reader for *An Oxford Elegy*, offering a more matter-of-fact, contemporary take than we're used to in the more Victorian moments of Matthew Arnold's verse. He is deftly supported by the London Mozart Players, whose wind solos throughout the disc are especially fine. The only blot on this pastoral landscape are the chorus, who lack the vocal youth and energy so crucial to this collection of young men's music.

Alexandra Coghlan

'Invitation au voyage'

L Boulanger Clairières dans le ciel. Nous nous aimerons tant. Vous m'avez regardé avec toute votre âme **Debussy** Le balcon. Harmonie du soir. Le jet d'eau. Recueillement. La mort

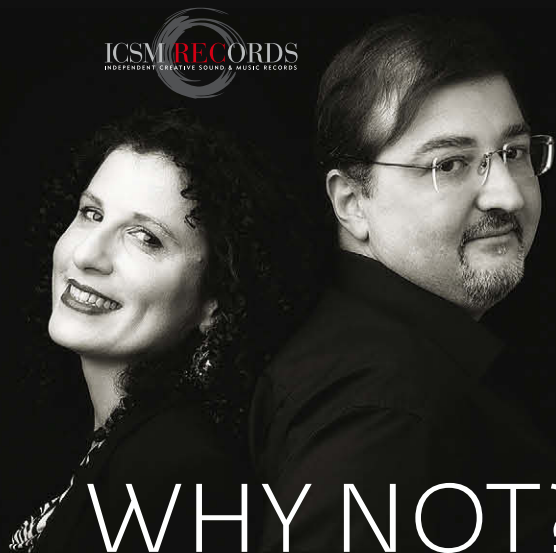
des amants. Soupir. Placet futile. Eventail
Duparc L'Invitation au voyage. Soupir.
Chanson triste. La vie antérieure
Hahn La chère blessure. A Chloris
La Presle Odelette. Voeu. Dédettes. Nocturne
Stéphanie d'Oustrac *mez* **Pascal Jourdan** *pf*
Ambronay © AMY042 (71' • DDD • T/t)



So much beauty, so much perfumed languor, so much rapture intermingled

with sorrow is inhabited in this collection of 'mélodies françaises'; the question is if you can stand a full 71 minutes of it. But never does this disc sink into dreamy sameness – and it emerges as one of the best of its kind to come out in recent years. The conviction, artistry and intelligent musical sequencing of mezzo-soprano Stéphanie d'Oustrac and pianist Pascal Jourdan are much in evidence in this thoroughly first-class package, with its rich but direct sound quality and packaging with full translations.

The usual chronological arrangement of composers is rejected in favour of an emotional arc that begins with traditionally shaped Duparc songs, progressing into the



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more abstract harmonies of Debussy's settings of Baudelaire, going further into more rarefied realms with the same composer's later Mallarmé settings, then coming a bit down to earth with the earlier, less stylised Boulanger songs from 1906 and then finishing with a few glasses of wine from Hahn.

The four little-known songs by Jacques de La Presle (1888-1969), written later than many in this collection, are tucked between Duparc and Debussy, making a nice bridge with their like-minded harmonic manner but also having an almost provocative brevity amid so much musical expanse elsewhere. In some ways, the progression can be charted by the punctuation of the texts. Duparc's end in periods, Debussy's with question marks, Boulanger with trails of ellipses and Hahn with an exclamation mark.

Performances by d'Oustrac and Jourdan are exactly what's needed here. Many singers put a lid on their vocal amplitude with Debussy; d'Oustrac does not, though her alluring full-throatedness never spills over into operatic overkill. Jourdan's piano sound is so rich one might describe it as chocolate but with a precision and directness in his manner of expression that never lets the music drift off into vagueness. **David Patrick Stearns**

'Joy Alone'

Adolphe A Thousand Years of Love - Valley Girl in Love **Chapi** Las hijas de Zebedeo - Las carceleras **Cymbala** He's been faithful **Gershwin** Porgy and Bess - Summertime **Heggie** Natural Selection - Animal Passion; Joy Alone. Paper Wings - A Route to the Sky **Liszt** Oh! quand je dors, S282 **Luna** El niño judío - De España vengo **Rachmaninov** Sing not to me, beautiful maiden, Op 4 No 4. Spring Waters, Op 14 No 11. How fair this spot, Op 21 No 7, Vocalise, Op 34 No 14 **R Strauss** Acht Gedichte aus Letzte Blätter, Op 10 - No 3, Die Nacht; No 8, Allerseelen. Heimliche Aufforderung, Op 27 No 3. Befreit, Op 39 No 4 **Traditional** Ride on, King Jesus **Angel Blue** *sop* **Iain Burnside** *pf* Opus Arte © OACD9020D (63' • DDD • T/t)



A winner at Operalia in 2009, Angel Blue is one of the top young singers on the 'to watch' list. For UK audiences she first stepped out as an exceptional Musetta in English National Opera's *La bohème*, her charisma as dazzling as the brilliance of her soprano. By all accounts her Rosenblatt Recital at Wigmore Hall – the operatic half of the programme boldly included *Adriana*

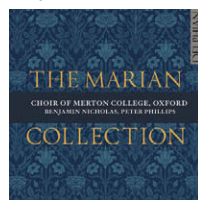
Lecouvreur, *La traviata* and *Tannhäuser* – was just as impressive but Opus Arte's recital disc, recorded after the event in the studio, is only of songs, primarily a potpourri of popular favourites.

This is a voice of youthful refulgence and versatility. The lazy, sun-soaked melody of Gershwin's 'Summertime' glints with midday radiance. Three songs by Jake Heggie effortlessly juggle cabaret panache, bittersweet lyricism and Habanera-like fire. A couple of zarzuela numbers tingle with Latin flair (she received first place in the Operalia Zarzuela competition). Modern American songs by Bruce Adolphe and Carol Cymbala nudge convincingly into popular territory. Over the course of a solo disc, though, one increasingly starts to wish that the vibrancy of her voice could be turned down a notch. The songs on her programme – three by Rachmaninov, four by Strauss, all sympathetically accompanied by Iain Burnside – are continually under the full glare of the spotlight. In addition, she is not very communicative in either Russian or German, which may explain why the performances rely more on operatic heft than Lied-like nuance. A shining future beckons for Angel Blue, certainly in opera, probably in crossover, too. As far as the song repertoire is concerned, the jury is currently out.

Richard Fairman

'The Marian Collection'

K Andrew Salve regina^a **Bruckner** Ave Maria^a **Byrd** Salve regina^b **G Jackson** I say that we are wound with mercy^c **Kendall** Regina caeli^a **M Martin** Salve sedes sapientiae^a **Nesbett** Magnificat^b **Palestrina** Alma redemptoris mater^b **Parsons** Ave Maria^b **Stravinsky** Ave Maria^a **Tabakova** Alma redemptoris mater^a **Tavener** Hymn for the Dormition of the Mother of God. A Hymn to the Mother of God. The Veil of the Temple - Mother of God, here I stand^a **Weir** Ave regina caelorum^a **Choir of Merton College, Oxford** / ^{ac}**Benjamin Nicholas**, ^b**Peter Phillips** with ^c**Charles Warren** *org* Delphian © DCD34144 (68' • DDD)



This landmark Delphian recording forms the fourth and final issue of a series designed to showcase Merton College's new choral foundation. The Chapel Choir's 35 singers criss-cross with astonishing versatility music from the late 15th century (Nesbett's *Magnificat*) through Palestrina, some rarely heard Byrd and more mainstream repertory from Stravinsky and Tavener, to a work by the

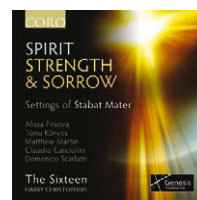
Master of the Queen's Music, Judith Weir. Her dancing, sweet *Ave regina caelorum* provides a perfect opener to a stimulating programme dedicated to the figure of the Virgin Mary, all of it put over with passion, aplomb and utter respect for the composers' intentions.

Central to this theme are the four Marian antiphons associated with the Office of Compline, heard in both 16th-century settings and new treatments by a quartet of British female composers. Of these latter, Kerry Andrew (*b1978*) and Hannah Kendall (*b1984*) have produced clangorous, brooding and technically challenging pieces, whereas Dobrinka Tabakova (*b1980*) treats the meditative *Alma redemptoris mater* in a highly effective quasi-orchestral style; this is one of the most memorable of the new works on the disc. John Tavener's *Mother of God, here I stand* floats with an effortless stillness, pinned down by some superb reedy low bass notes.

With the exception of Jackson's *I say that we are wound with mercy*, accompanied with great sensitivity by organist Charles Warren, this is an entirely *a cappella* disc, in which intonation problems do not exist. By way of conclusion, Bruckner's *Ave Maria* (recorded at a greater distance from the microphones) provides a soothing warm bath. **Malcolm Riley**

'Spirit, Strength & Sorrow' G

Settings of the Stabat mater by **Cascioli**, **Firsova**, **Kõrvits**, **M Martin** and **D Scarlatti** **The Sixteen** / **Harry Christophers** Coro © COR16127 (69' • DDD • T/t)



Ever innovative in their programming, Harry Christophers and The Sixteen juxtapose Domenico Scarlatti's beautiful 10-part *Stabat mater* – *stile antico* polyphony viewed through the prism of the Italian Baroque – and three new settings of verses from the 13th-century poem commissioned by the Genesis Foundation. All three are touching and effective: imaginative in their choral sonorities and colouring of the text, skilfully balancing a strong feeling for tradition with a distinctive individual voice.

Tõnu Kõrvits draws on folk music from a south-eastern region of his native Estonia in a flavoursome mix of modality and tortuous chromaticism. Emphasising compassion and the blissful certainty of paradise over sin and suffering, Russian-born Alissa Firsova distils a quiet, luminous ecstasy in slow-moving textures that evoke

both the music of the Orthodox liturgy and (in its oscillations between major and minor) the Western tonal tradition. With a nod to Benjamin Britten, Matthew Martin interleaves parts of the Latin text with specially written verses by poet-priest Robert Willis to create a 'Passiontide Triptych'. The upshot is the most varied and dramatic of the three *Stabat mater*-inspired works, an individual contribution to the Anglican choral tradition that also weaves in the *Salve regina* plainchant and an old German chorale.

In all the works here The Sixteen sing with their now-familiar eloquence and polish. Caught in the glowing acoustic of St Augustine's, Kilburn, their sound is beautifully integrated over a wide dynamic range (from rarefied *pianissimos* to *tuttis* of sumptuous fullness), their intonation well-nigh perfect. At moments in their intimate and elegiac performance of the Scarlatti I wanted a dose of Latin theatricality. But in the new works their singing, technically and expressively, is beyond criticism, whether in the rapt, incantatory lines of the Firsova, the violent picture of the fires of hell in the Martin or the mysteriously serene prayer that closes the Kõrvits.

Richard Wigmore

'The Spy's Choirbook'

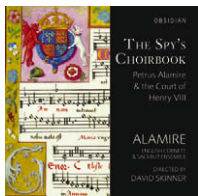


'Petrus Alamire & the Court of Henry VIII'

Agricola Dulces exuviae **Anonymous** Nesciens mater. O Domine Iesu Christe/Et sanctissima mater tua. Maximilla Christo amabilis. Sancta et immaculata virginitas. Dulcissima virgo Maria. Tota pulchra es amica mea/O pulcherrima mulierum/Salve. O sancta Maria virgo virginum. Recordamini quomodo praedixit filium. O beatissime Domine Iesu Christe/Fac me de tua gratia ut. Ave sanctissima Maria. Congratulamini mihi omnes. Alma redemptoris mater. Dulces exuviae. Iesus autem transiens **Févin** Adiutorium nostrum. Sancta Trinitas unus Deus. Egregie Christi martir Christophore/Ecce enim **Ghiselin** Dulces exuviae **Isaac** Anima mea liquefacta est/Invenerunt me/Filiae Ierusalem **Josquin** Descendi in hortum meum (attrib). Fama malum. Missus est Gabriel archangelus. Dulces exuviae. Absalon fili mi (attrib La Rue). Tribulatio et angustia invenerunt me (attrib **La Rue** Ave regina caelorum. Vexilla regis/Passio Domini nostri. Doleo super te frater mi Ionatha **Mouton** Celeste beneficium. Ecce Maria genuit nobis. Dulces exuviae **Strus** Sancta Maria succurre miseris/O werder mondt **Thérache** Verbum bonum et suave

Alamire; English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble / David Skinner

Obsidian © ② CD712 (115' • DDD • T/t)



happens to have been active as a political informer alongside his more upfront activities as a singer, composer and music copyist. The lovely choirbook in the British Library has Henry VIII's coat of arms on the first motet, and David Skinner here proposes that it was a personal gift from Alamire to the king in about 1516 – though nobody has yet convincingly contradicted Honey Meconi's carefully argued proposal (1998) that it was a diplomatic gift from Margaret of Austria at the end of Henry VIII's French campaign of June to October 1513.

Either way, what we have here is a complete recording of the entire choirbook in its manuscript order: 34 four-voice motets from the first decade of the century by French and Franco-Flemish composers, giving a magnificent panorama of the repertory. Most of them have never been recorded before.

Most of the music is performed by the mixed voices alone, a small group sounding gorgeous throughout. For a few particularly grand motets they are joined by the wind players, who perform alone in five of the pieces. But perhaps the main thrill is the sequence of five settings of Dido's last speech from the *Aeneid*, *Dulces exuviae*, by La Rue (possibly), Agricola, Josquin, Mouton and Ghiselin, then immediately followed by one of the most haunting motets of all time, *Absalon fili mi*, ascribed elsewhere to Josquin but now widely believed to be by Pierre de La Rue.

David Fallows

'Transeamus'

'English Carols and Motets'

Anonymous Ah! My dear Son. Clangat tuba. Dou way Robyn/Sancta Mater. Ecce quod natura. St Thomas honour we. Lullay, lullow: I saw a swete semely sight. Marvel not Joseph. There is no rose. Thomas gemma Cantuarie primula **Cornysh Snr** Ave Maria mater Dei **Lambe** Stella caeli **Plummer** Anna mater matris Christi (two versions)

Sheryngham Ah, gentle Jesu

The Hilliard Ensemble

ECM New Series © 481 1106 (68' • DDD)



Several of The Hilliard Ensemble's earliest recordings were of 15th-century

English music, so it is fitting that they should return to this repertory in this, their final recording. Much of this music has figured in their concerts without having been recorded previously but several pieces hark back to those early years. The opening number, *Thomas gemma*, is one they recorded as part of a set devoted to Thomas of Canterbury. The tone is not quite so bold now but the interplay between voices is as absorbing as ever. The remaining numbers devoted to the saint are among the disc's finest performances. Mary, the most serenaded saint of all, has most of the rest of the programme to herself. The carols run through the programme like a thread: *Marvel not Joseph* blends intricacy and intimacy, and the lilt of *Lullay, lullow* and *There is no rose* are touchingly conveyed. Particularly in the more elaborate polyphony, tempi are a touch slow for comfort (in the motets by Plummer, for example), but The Hilliards' feeling for programme-building is aptly illustrated by the final number, Sheryngham's *Ah, gentle Jesu*, with each of whose verses the dialogue between Christ and the penitent sinner assumes ever greater poignancy – a marvel of pacing and restrained emotion.

It is poignant also to bid The Hilliards farewell at the conclusion of their remarkable career. In Philip Clark's excellent appreciation of a year ago, contemporary music rightly played a significant part. But although it did feature more prominently in their programming after the departure of founder-director Paul Hillier (particularly their collaboration with Jan Garbarek), in fact the majority of their recorded output has been of medieval and Renaissance repertories like this. The group's early recordings of English music had a brash self-confidence which time has not dimmed. I well remember the revelation of their first Josquin recording for EMI Reflexe when it came out, and hearing their Dunstaple shortly afterwards – two recordings of which I may truthfully say that they changed my life. In latter years, the sound has been more studiously polished and less edgy, the repertoire somewhat more uniform in tone. Those who knew them only through their ECM recordings would miss bawdy Purcellian catches, louche 15th-century lyrics, more decorous 19th-century German part-songs and some very fine Schütz, for example. This is an impressive legacy for which the members of The Hilliard Ensemble past and present have earned our enduring gratitude.

Fabrice Fitch

GRAMOPHONE *Collector*

MOZART'S REQUIEM

David Thresher listens to the latest batch of recordings of Mozart's fascinating, frustrating unfinished masterpiece



A Requiem to remember: Laurence Equilbey finds darkness and drama in Mozart's last utterance

uck and white-goods failures traditionally come in threes – and so, it seems, do recordings of Mozart's Requiem. Barely a month goes by without yet another landing on the Reviews Editor's desk; and it says much for this endlessly fascinating (and frustrating) work that pretty much every single one has some unique merit. Among standout offerings recently, John Butt's *Gramophone* Award-winning disc with the Dunedin Consort (Linn, 5/14) must take pride of place but mention should also be made of dramatic, interventionist readings from Leonardo García Alarcón with French forces (Ambronay, 7/13) and Teodor Currentzis in Novosibirsk (Alpha, 8/11). Three comparisons, then, and three markedly different approaches – which can also be said without hesitation about these three new recordings.

In terms of approach, closest to Butt's conception is **Laurence Equilbey** with her crack chamber choir Accentus and the recently convened (2012) Insula Orchestra. There's a touch of the Currentzis outlook too, with the ticking of bow upon fingerboard in the 'Dies irae' and maximum drama wrought from the 'Tuba mirum' – no surprise given soloists of the operatic pedigree of Sandrine Piau, Sara Mingardo, Werner Güra and Christopher Purves. By ignoring Mozart's *forte* marking and starting *piano*, Equilbey makes the 'Kyrie' build compellingly to its climax, and this is balanced by a dark, looming

reading of the 'Agnus Dei'. Sticking points for this Requiemophile include a failure to differentiate between two types of appoggiatura in the 'Tuba mirum' (notated as crotchets in the tenor solo, quavers in the alto); Piau's tendency to snatch at semiquavers at 'ne me perdas illa die' in the 'Recordare'; and the double-dotting of rhythms in the 'Rex tremendae' – Mozart was quite capable of indicating such a stark scourging figure when he required it (cf the 'Qui tollis' of the C minor Mass). Nevertheless, thanks not least to the near-infallible singing of Accentus, this is a Requiem to remember.

Equilbey follows the traditional score – that completed (largely) by Süssmayr in the weeks following Mozart's death – give or take a few emendations, mainly in the deployment of the brass instruments (no editor or edition is named on the packaging). **Masaaki Suzuki** takes a radically different tack, employing a new elaboration of the Mozart fragment by his son, the Bach Collegium's organist Masato Suzuki. This adopts the abortive completion attempted by Joseph Eybler before the manuscript was handed to Süssmayr; Suzuki has filled in the gaps left by Eybler. Followers of such matters will remember that the edition prepared by HC Robbins Landon for The Hanover Band (Nimbus, 7/90) also opted for Eybler but Suzuki's interventions are the more striking. In terms of outward form, there is the addition of a (brief) projection of the

'Amen' fugue whose sketch was discovered in the early 1960s and widely presumed to be intended for the close of the Sequence. In terms of the work's sound, ears will be pricked by the addition of trombones to the 'Recordare' at 'Ingemisco' and 'ne perenni', and of trumpets to the G minor 'Quam olim Abrahae' fugue. Ears will not be pricked, however, by an acoustic that swamps inner instrumental voices, negating the effect, for instance, of Eybler's ingenious independent viola line in the 'Recordare' – which creates a real four-part texture similar to Mozart's in the 'Domine Deus' of the C minor Mass and is far superior to Süssmayr's clumsy attempts at counterpoint. Oddities include the restoration of Mozart's anacrusis to the reprise of the 'Quam olim' and some rather mannered dynamics (the *crescendo* at 'favilla' in the 'Lacrimosa', for example); additions include a coupling of the *Solemn Vespers*, K339, and a reprise of the 'Tuba mirum' that substitutes a bassoon for the trombone after its initial fanfare, as per the work's first edition (1800).

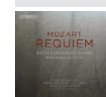
John Lubbock's live recording – more a *souvenir d'occasion* than anybody's library choice – purports (in Colin Anderson's notes) to use the Robbins Landon edition but, as far as I can make out from close score study, sticks fairly consistently to Süssmayr. The Orchestra of St John's and their associated choir do not offer the polish and finish of the other two recordings: there are split notes, fluffed entries, a bronchial audience and audibly tiring sopranos. Nevertheless, for all that, there is an honesty to the performance that engages the listener.

The coming months will surely bring yet more avalanches of Mozart Requiems. But from this trio of discs – even if it remains the Dunedin Consort's to which I will return most often – I found Equilbey's recording most satisfying all round, Suzuki's the most thought-provoking, and, despite its shortcomings, Lubbock's the most likeable. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Mozart Requiem
Accentus; Insula Orch / Equilbey
Naive © V5370



Mozart Requiem
Bach Collegium Japan / Suzuki
BIS © BIS2091



Mozart Requiem OSJ Voices;
Orch of St John's / Lubbock
OSJ Alive © OSJCD02

REISSUES

Peter Quantrill on Sony Classical's complete Boulez,
James Jolly on some recent vocal reissues and
Rob Cowan on RCA's Pierre Monteux edition

Raiding the archives



Sony Classical revisits the CBS years when Pierre Boulez was recording everything from Beethoven to Messiaen

In his eulogy on the death of the conductor-composer Roger Désormière in 1963, **Pierre Boulez** cited the older man's stated goal: 'extreme sobriety...[but] sobriety of gesture does not mean a failure to carry expressiveness to its highest pitch, nor a lack of strength or dash.'

What this means in practice for the Paris *Wozzeck* of 1963 – his first recording with CBS/Sony, and his operatic debut! – is a dissection of the score's anatomy at the expense of its pathos, only exaggerated by the kind of multitrack-mono recording more associated with Sgt Pepper than the Sergeant Major. The succeeding discs of Messiaen (*Et exspecto*) and Berlioz (the *Symphonie fantastique/Lélio* diptych) try out unusual perspectives for their singular instrumentations: like many musicians, Boulez seems to be less interested in the final, edited package than in how to get there. It's possible both to understand why he was reluctant for his experimental reading of Beethoven's Fifth to see the light of day again, and also to admire its deconstructed weirdness: Klemperer

meets Foucault, with an instrumental balance as naked and exposed as the formal conception is monumental.

Boulez the conductor remakes Brecht's dictum that art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it, just as Boulez the composer breaks the mirror with *Le marteau sans maître* and holds up the fragments to our perplexed enchantment. To confuse that determination with alienation is to grossly misunderstand both musician and playwright: Boulez has often been accused of a deracinated 'objectivity' holding the artwork at arm's length, because he conducts as a composer does, with the score the first and foremost source of information, and yet time and again this box shows how he can deliver a 'big' performance. You can almost see the smile on Boulez's face as William Vacchiano, longtime Principal Trumpet of the NYPO, channels his inner Miles Davis on the top line of the *Poem of Ecstasy*, yet note the pains he takes to ensure the bell pierces its climactic din. So what, so Scriabin? Try the full-blooded relish of Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat* (complete, for once). In the control

room was Andrew Kazdin, to whom Boulez once paid tribute as 'the best producer I ever had': he had Kazdin accompany him to Bayreuth for *The Ring*.

The Bayreuth invitation had been issued by Wieland Wagner, who was as influential on Boulez's music-making as Désormière – 'I would have followed him anywhere,' Boulez said. All the Wagner recordings here are fascinating – including a *Meistersinger* Prelude of archaic grandeur and gleeful precision – but the prize is a *Wesendonck-Lieder* with one of his favourite singers, Yvonne Minton, his accompaniment so relaxed that she is free to give fullest expression to the *Tristan*-esque yearning of the songs. His work with singers is a highlight of the set as a whole because he is the master of the line but a servant of the singer's tone, wonderfully illustrated by a mixed Ravel album including *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* with José van Dam.

The impact of conducting Wagner can also be traced through those works he re-recorded such as the Op 6 pieces of Berg, which he has probably programmed more frequently than anyone. The 'Round-Dance' of 1984 is slightly quicker than in 1967 but the pulse is less rigid, with more point to the accents and more air around them, the kind of operatic *rubato* missing from his first Bayreuth *Parsifal* (1966-70) and expertly shaping the second (2006-08), as well as the 'operas of the mind' included here: *Pelléas*, *Bluebeard*, *Die glückliche Hand*.

It's true that his *Wooden Prince* doesn't dance to the folk tunes of Dorati, his *Daphnis* is untinted by the Impressionist coloration of Ansermet. His singular foray into neo-classical Stravinsky, the suite from *Pulcinella*, he once called 'a toy in my hand': a tin drum compared with the composer's own jack-in-the-box. To accuse him of missing the point is missing the point: Boulez and his contemporary colleagues saw with bitterness and personal loss where nationalism had taken the previous generation, and they set out in the opposite direction. Criticism of Boulez having done too little for composers younger than him can obscure his pioneering work in making accurate, idiomatic, well-engineered records of the masterpieces from the first half-century of musical modernism. *Amériques*, *Petrushka*, the orchestral pieces of Bartók and the Second Viennese School: these will be forever defined by performance standards pre- and post-Boulez.

In issuing the set as facsimiles of the LPs, Sony has included the original sleeve-notes (welcome, especially if they're by Boulez or Felix Aprahamian) but omitted Ravel's *Shéhérazade* Overture and *Fanfare pour L'éventail de Jeanne* (sloppy) as well as still-unreleased recordings such as *Lieder eines*

fabrenden Gesellen with Barry McDaniel (regrettable). The first Webern edition is excerpted to include only those recordings directly supervised by Boulez, but his recording of Elliott Carter's *Symphony for Three Orchestras* is recoupled with its disc-mate, Richard Fitz directing *A mirror on which to dwell*. There is, alas, no place for Charles Rosen's disc of Boulez's First and Third Piano Sonatas (though that is now available in Rosen's Columbia Collection, 12/14). But let's not carp. Any future search to discover the nature and extent of Boulez's decisive impact on 20th-century culture could do no better than turn first to this box. **Peter Quantrill**

A couple of de luxe repackagings from Decca give a stylish new life to two classic opera sets – **Donizetti's** *L'elisir d'amore* (conducted by Richard Bonyngé) and **Puccini's** *Turandot* (conducted by Zubin Mehta). I have, much to my surprise, to declare an interest as both sets carry part of a long essay I wrote last year for Vol 1 of Decca's lavish 'Luciano Pavarotti Edition'. It tends to draw the focus onto the great tenor rather than the great soprano who is his partner – Dame Joan Sutherland – which is slightly unfair, especially as, when the sets were recorded, Sutherland was easily the bigger star and sings superbly here.

The *L'elisir* set was one of the loveliest things Sutherland ever did on record (not quite in the league of *La fille du régiment*, but near), and the *Turandot* must also come close, especially as it was a role you wouldn't necessarily have associated with her. As Donizetti's Adina she is charming – touching, exuberant, virtuoso (her coloratura is astounding), and always very human. Pavarotti is a perfect Nemorino, his lyric tenor made for the role. With Spiro Malas a characterful Dulcamara and Bonyngé drawing fizzing playing from the ECO, this is a delight. A hardback cover, essays and full text and translations in German, English and French make this a perfect gift. In addition to the two CDs it contains a Blu-ray audio disc that gives the already fine sound extra focus and punch (Presto is asking £25.75 for the package).

The *Turandot* (similarly packaged and priced) is the set that gave the world Pavarotti's rendition of 'Nessun dorma' and again he makes a fine impression. Sutherland more than proves her mettle as the icy Princess and Montserrat Caballé gives us a heart-rending Liù, sung with an almost unbelievable beauty of tone. It's a performance of real emotional depth and insight. With a strong cast (including Peter Pears's Emperor Altoum) and conducting of ideal Puccinian sweep by Zubin



Sutherland and Pavarotti: glorious in *Turandot*

Mehta, it's the kind of performance you simply wouldn't hear live. The LPO play magnificently and Decca's glorious sound – especially when heard on the Blu-ray disc – gives real scale to the panoramic musical picture. One of the great opera recordings.

Another great tenor, **Plácido Domingo**, is the subject of an eight-CD collection of his Spanish song recordings made for Sony Classical. This isn't classical music but the sort of undemanding middle-of-the-road fare that has gained Domingo a colossal audience, especially in the Spanish-speaking world. The disc I enjoyed most was the first one, 'Siempre en mi corazón', a collection of songs by the Cuban Ernesto Lecuona. Dance music and its seductive rhythms underlie so much of this collection – boléros, tangos and waltzes abound – and it's very hard not to be won over. The box carries the line that this music 'represents the music closest to Plácido Domingo's heart'; I do hope that's not entirely true, as Domingo has probably made the greatest contribution to tenor-singing across a greater range of composers than any of his colleagues, past or present.

A two-CD set 'De l'opéra à la chanson' also reveals a singer of wide musical sympathies, the French soprano **Natalie Dessay**. It's quite a whirlwind tour that in the space of a few tracks whisks us from Monteverdi, via Brahms and Richard Strauss, to Villa-Lobos, Michel Legrand and Cole Porter. Her technique is remarkable but so is her ability to inhabit a part and give it a distinct personality. If you can cope with the range of music here, it gives an enormous amount of pleasure. How lucky singers are today to be able to dip into music from across five centuries

and find the partners to perform it with the appropriate style.

Timed to coincide with his new book, *Schubert's Winter Journey: An Anatomy of an Obsession* (Faber: 2014), Ian Bostridge's EMI recordings of the three **Schubert** song-cycles, *Die schöne Müllerin*, *Winterreise* and (yes, I know it's not really a cycle) *Schwanengesang*, have been gathered together and reissued as a set by Warner Classics. I'm a great fan of Bostridge's way with Lieder: I appreciate the intelligence with which he approaches the text, I enjoy his timbre and – highlighted here – I like the way he interacts creatively with his pianists. This last point is driven home here as he has three different – and very distinguished – partners: Mitsuko Uchida, Leif Ove Andsnes and Sir Antonio Pappano.

The *Schöne Müllerin* with Uchida is fascinating. As John Warrack remarked when reviewing it first time round (5/05), 'Bostridge seems to regard the cycle not so much narratively as in retrospect, as if the whole were the experience of loss, relived wistfully when not in actual pain'. There is anguish here but it's a truly enthralling approach. And both Andsnes and Pappano bring wonderful insights to their contributions. The bonus here is a DVD of David Alden's dramatisation, made for Channel 4, of *Winterreise*, supported with a kind of 'making of' film which reveals that Bostridge was not always convinced by what he was being asked to do (I suspect his book may well be the logical riposte to Alden's – and others' – interpretations). Stylishly packaged, it doesn't contain any texts or notes – so find them on the internet before you settle down to listen.

James Jolly

THE RECORDINGS

Pierre Boulez

'The Complete Columbia Album Collection'
Sony Classical © (67 discs) 88843 01333-2

Donizetti *L'elisir d'amore*

Richard Bonyngé

Decca Ⓜ ③ (② + ) 478 7811DOR3

Puccini *Turandot*

Zubin Mehta

Decca Ⓜ ③ (② + ) 478 7815DH3

Plácido Domingo

'The Latin Album Collection'


Sony Classical Ⓜ ⑧ 88843 03161-2

Natalie Dessay 'De l'opéra à la chanson'

Erato Ⓜ ② 963639-5

Schubert Song-cycles

Ian Bostridge; Mitsuko Uchida, Antonio Pappano, Leif Ove Andsnes

Warner Classics Ⓜ ④ (③ + )
2564 62041-8

A true 20th-century maestro



Explore Pierre Monteux's art on record in The Complete RCA Album Collection

Just over 20 years ago in these pages (9/94), Jonathan Swain reviewed RCA's 15-disc Pierre Monteux Edition, his opening quote, from the pianist Leon Fleisher, 'under-heralded, under-sung, under-appreciated except by those who knew'. Hear, hear. Well, those who knew then have since been joined by a good many fresh Monteux admirers, primarily through the release on Music & Arts of the 'Standard Symphony Orchestra' concerts, broadcasts from San Francisco (1941-52) that include repertoire Monteux never recorded commercially (CD1192, 13 CDs), but also other sets of previously unissued broadcasts with various orchestras. Add Eloquence's forthcoming box of the complete Beethoven symphonies and selected overtures with the LSO and VPO for Decca and, with the handsome, well-annotated collection now to hand, the art of Pierre Monteux can at long last be appreciated in all its considerable glory.

Needless to say being **The Complete RCA Album Collection** this latest offering includes much that was not featured before. Three versions of Franck's D minor Symphony for openers, whereas only the most recent of them – with the Chicago Symphony, recorded in 1961 – made the previous edition. Headstrong accounts with the San Francisco Symphony from 1941 and 1950 suggest youthfulness in abundance, though the compressed sound, while exciting in the way a 1940s movie soundtrack excites, compromises on subtlety. This is a prominent characteristic of virtually all the San Francisco recordings, so be warned. Not for Monteux Toscanini's Teutonic approach to the Franck but something altogether more impulsive. Having said that, the first movement of the nobler Chicago version is notably broader than either of its mono predecessors.

The earlier set featured just one recording of the work that Monteux is perhaps most famous for, Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, which he premiered to riotous effect in 1913. Here we also have his second recording, made in 1945 in San Francisco – his first, for Columbia, dates from 1929 – and in my view the most impressive of his performances on disc, raw, rasping, elemental, with deep, bellowing brass, vivid woodwinds (the upwards flourish at the close of the work has rarely sounded more vivid) and pounding big drums. The accent is on rhythm rather than on speed and the upshot of Monteux's approach is immensely powerful. Its better-played Boston successor, also included, isn't nearly as impressive. A fairly vivid Boston *Petrushka* is another worthwhile sound document. Another work represented afresh by a second version is Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy*, a 1952 Boston Symphony recording having found favour in the previous reissue context, whereas its 1947 San Francisco predecessor enjoys cruder but more integrated sound (the solo trumpet isn't quite so insistently present) and, in performance terms, greater spontaneity.

'Monteux's Tchaikovsky is alive and full of detail though never sentimental'

San Francisco accounts of Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 4 and 8 were part of the original collection. Both are here too and subscribe to the characteristic Monteux Beethoven style, forthright, unaffected and respectful of the music's solid architecture. Added to those is a Second Symphony from roughly the same period (1949) which, although typically fired from the hip, isn't quite so sure of itself, certainly not in comparison with Monteux's stereo LSO version for Decca. The original LP coupling for Beethoven No 4 was Schumann No 4, and is now reinstated as part of the larger, not-quite-so-generous 'original jacket' segment of the set – the first 10 CDs are well-filled compilations of shellac originals – a punchy performance, often volatile and pretty swift. One recording is duplicated on two different CDs: Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue, BWV582, in Respighi's boldly outspoken orchestration, a fair match for the more intense Toscanini recordings. Rimsky-Korsakov's *Antar* (wonderful flutes) and *Sadko* (Op 5) are memorable, as is *Sheherazade* from 1942 where things really hot up for the finale, with its brilliant woodwind solos, a powerful bass-line and

an extremely dramatic shipwreck. Russian-American Naoum Blinder, Monteux's concertmaster in San Francisco (and Isaac Stern's teacher), is the sensitive solo violinist.

Those interested in the technical side of recording history will be drawn in particular to two fascinating 'first releases'. Both are appended to French programmes with the Boston Symphony, a coupling of Debussy's *La mer* and *Nocturnes* from 1954-55 and Delibes's *Coppélia* and *Sylvia* suites from 1953. The Delibes includes, as a bonus, *Coppélia's* Prelude and Mazurka in 'RCA's earliest surviving stereo recording' which, apart from a spot of tape rumble near the beginning, is pretty stunning given its age, certainly better than the Toscanini stereo broadcasts from the following year. Monteux's way with both ballets is vigorous in the extreme, *Sylvia's* 'Les chasseresses' and 'Cortège de Bacchus' especially. As to *La mer*, the 1954 stereo tape of the complete recording was lost and only a fragment of the first movement survives, tantalising evidence of how vivid and transparent the original must have sounded.

The really big news for me was Monteux's 1956 account of Verdi's *La traviata*, never on CD before (so far as I know), certainly not in the West, with a cast including Rosanna Carteri, Cesare Valletti and Leonard Warren, and the Chorus and Orchestra of the Rome Opera Theatre. Strange to say it was recorded in mono, though at the time RCA already had a number of excellent stereo tapes under its belt, but the sound is more than serviceable and all three principals are on exceptionally fine vocal form, Carteri's soprano ringing resplendent, Valletti lyrical in the manner of Schipa, Warren typically charismatic with that big, nut-brown baritone of his. The overall effect is both dramatic and musical. Somewhat better known, but just as involving and beautifully sung, is Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* from the following year, also recorded in Rome, with Risë Stevens, Lisa Della Casa and Roberta Peters, this time in stereo. Both operas benefit from Monteux's judicious pacing.

The first edition included Monteux's admirably dignified though youthful Boston accounts of Tchaikovsky's last three symphonies, which have since been reissued in different contexts, but they're good to have, alive and full of feeling as they are, though never sentimental. Concertos programmed include Bruch's First and Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* (five-movement version) with Yehudi Menuhin, both recorded in 1945, the



Pierre Monteux's career for RCA stretched from 1941 to 1958, the bulk of it made in San Francisco where he was Music Director from 1935 to 1952

latter, though fitfully impressive, no real match for Menuhin's earlier HMV version with Enescu conducting. Jascha Heifetz is represented by Chausson's *Poème* (previously released on Testament), superb save for the crumbly sound, and, from the same day (December 17, 1945), Louis Gruenberg's showy, all-American Violin Concerto, an acrobatic amalgam of jazz and folk influences, tonally alluring and with playing at speed that has to be heard to be believed. Quite a day's worth of sessions, I'd say, though in this case I'd opt for Michael Dutton's transfer of the Gruenberg, which minimises the sound's obvious inadequacies.

Prior to this new set, Leonid Kogan was represented solely by an elegant account of Saint-Saëns's *Havanaise* but the main work on the original LP, Khachaturian's Violin Concerto, is added here, a brilliant performance comparable with the best of David Oistrakh's, Monteux and his Bostonians providing Kogan with an ideally zestful orchestral backdrop. Henryk Szeryng gives a regal performance of Brahms's Violin Concerto, always 'his' work, just as Brahms was a firm Monteux favourite. In the Concerto he conducts the LSO but two San Francisco versions of the Second Symphony, the *Alto Rhapsody* (with a characteristically intense Marian Anderson) and *The Song*

of Destiny provide further evidence. That said, a Fritz Reiner *Alto Rhapsody*, which is broader than Monteux's by some two minutes and coupled with Monteux's Mahler *Kindertotenlieder*, finds Anderson singing with greater security and perception. Mozart wasn't exactly everyday fare for Monteux and although his accompaniments for pianist Lili Kraus are fairly robust in Concertos Nos 12 and 18, Kraus herself

'He had a burning desire to get the music across as compellingly as possible'

seems less than wholeheartedly engaged. There's something oddly cavalier about both performances.

Two San Francisco accounts of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* follow the first movement's heated narrative and queasy ebb and flow: either will do nicely. JS called Monteux's San Francisco reading of Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* (previously unreleased at the time) 'unique and revelatory', drawing certain parallels with Willem Mengelberg in New York, though the latter is better played and more seductively – and painstakingly – phrased. As for Ravel, a playful *Alborada del gracioso* from

1947, a thrilling *La valse* from 1941 and a 1946 version of *Valses nobles et sentimentales* that runs the gamut of moods and colours are early highlights, as is the first *Daphnis et Chloé*, imperfectly recorded and with a chorus leading to the 'Danse guerrière' but not taking part in it. Other works featured are by d'Indy, Chausson (including the B flat Symphony and *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* with Gladys Swarthout, plus various songs), Gounod, Ibert, Mendelssohn, Milhaud and Wagner. But maybe the best place to sample, initially at least, is Chabrier's joyous *Fête polonaise*, as exuberant, stylish and exciting an example of Monteux's art as is available to us. Through these 39 CDs (currently £89 from Presto) you will encounter a musician's musician, someone who had no truck with fussing or tampering, just a burning desire to get the music across as accurately and compellingly as possible. The 40th disc features an 80th-birthday interview that helps focus Monteux as an immensely likeable personality with a musical career that in most essentials was second to none in the 20th century. **Rob Cowan**

THE RECORDING

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Opera



David Patrick Stearns reviews Don Giovanni from Baden-Baden:

'This production is full of handsome stage pictures bathed in twilight, wintry blues'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



Edward Seckerson on a live taping of Tchaikovsky's last opera:

'Maybe, just maybe, Netrebko's advocacy will bring a heartfelt and glorious piece out of the cold'

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 93**

Bellini

I Capuleti e i Montecchi

Nicole Cabell *sop*.....**Giulietta**
Joyce DiDonato *mez*.....**Romeo**
Saimir Pirgu *ten*.....**Tebaldo**
Eric Owens *bass-bar*.....**Capellio**
Ao Li *bass-bar*.....**Lorenzo**
San Francisco Opera Chorus and Orchestra /
Riccardo Frizza

Stage director **Vincent Boussard**

Video director **Frank Zamacona**

EuroArts (F) DVD 205 9668; (F) Blu-ray 205 9664

(135' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Recorded live October 2012



Such are the purely aural delights of Bellini's version of the Romeo and Juliet story – based on an earlier, more

straightforward telling of it than Shakespeare's – that seeing it on Blu-ray might not be the most pressing requirement for a *bel canto* fan. Certainly, Vincent Boussard's production doesn't do a great deal to emphasise or clarify the drama. Christian Lacroix provides some preposterous costumes: for the wedding party, the men, dressed in extravagant tails and top hats, resemble Victorian conjurers, while the women seem all to have been dragged backwards through a box of especially colourful offcuts. The main feature of Vincent Lemaire's set is a dirty-grey box, variously lit, to which he adds a washbasin for Giulietta's room (she clambers on to it for half of 'Oh! Quante volte'), riding saddles dangling down from above in the opening scene, and broad stairs upstage for the wedding.

Arguably, though, Boussard's direction doesn't really get in the way. But it is undoubtedly eccentric, with the interaction between hero and heroine kept cool and abstract in a confusing final scene – Giulietta stands up while still asleep; Romeo stays standing when he dies. Much else is bizarrely choreographed but the

leading couple nevertheless manage to convey their emotions persuasively: DiDonato, in particular, knows how to act in this repertoire.

She also, of course, knows how to sing it, imbuing her lines with elegance and urgency, musicality and, when needed, bravura. She's deeply touching in the final scene, even if I find the timbre short on richness, while the fast, fluttery vibrato can risk overburdening some of Bellini's purer vocal lines. The blend with Nicole Cabell's Giulietta is not ideal, either, and the soprano's richness of tone and slightly bendy way with the notes is different to what we often hear in the role on disc.

There's nevertheless a lot to be enjoyed from these two heartfelt central performances, matched by decent support from a forthright Saimir Pirgu (Tebaldo) and an implacable Eric Owens (Capellio). Riccardo Frizza conducts straightforwardly but stylishly. If you can overlook the sometimes baffling production, this is recommendable as a well-presented, modern video version of the piece.

Hugo Shirley

Cavalli

Elena

Emöke Baráth *sop*.....**Elena/Venere**
Valer Barna-Sabadus *countertenor*.....**Menelao**
Fernando Guimarães *ten*.....**Teseo**
Solenn' Lavanant Linke *mez*.....**Peritoo**
Rodrigo Ferreira *countertenor*.....**Ippolita/Pallade**
Emiliano Gonzalez Toro *ten*.....**Iro**
Anna Reinhold *mez*.....**Tindaro/Nettuno**
Mariana Flores *sop*.....**Erginda/Giunone/Castore**
Majdouline Zerari *mez*.....**Eurite/La Verità**
Brendan Tuohy *ten*.....**Diomede/Creonte**
Christopher Lowrey *countertenor*.....
.....**Euripilo/La Discordia/Polluce**
Job Tomé *bar*.....**Antiloco**
Cappella Mediterranea / Leonardo García Alarcón

Stage director **Jean-Yves Ruf**

Video director **Corentin Leconte**

Ricercar (F) 2 DVD RIC346

(177' • PAL • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 2 • S/s)

Recorded live at the Aix-en-Provence Festival,
July 2013



This Aix-en-Provence production (2013) represents the first time something close to the complete score of

Elena (1659) has been performed since the mid-17th century. Helen, the most beautiful woman in the world, is desired by Menelaus, who disguises himself as an Amazon woman in order to appeal to her love of wrestling. However, Helen is also lusted after by Theseus, who kidnaps her and seduces her – notwithstanding the inconvenient outrage of his jilted fiancée Hippolyta (a real Amazonian). To be fair to Theseus, he's a victim of the gods, who made him do it.

The Théâtre du Jeu de Paume is small enough to enable real intimacy in the action and singing, and the stage set is like a Renaissance lecture theatre of the kind in which university students used to observe dissections, with protective panels a bit like a bullring. Within this wooden arena, scene changes are created using simple props such as a large sail carried by supernumeraries to suggest a ship, and creeping red vines to insinuate a forest. Ridiculous shenanigans are enacted with far more subtlety than one might expect – when Helen's father falls instantly in love with the disguised Menelaus, not realising 'she' is a man, the impression generated is one of sadness rather than absurdity. The tragicomic tone of the production feels less like a simplistic farce and much more like Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, with all the emotions of love, such as jealousy, infatuation, infidelity, lust and blissfulness, rendered sincerely. There are some short juicy musical moments as good as anything else Cavalli produced for the stage, such as Helen's languid entrance aria anticipating the forthcoming pleasures of love (sung radiantly by Emöke Baráth, whose performance could indeed launch a thousand ships), and an intertwining love duet for Helen and Menelaus that begins Act 3. Countertenor Valer Barna-Sabadus



Costumes by Christian Lacroix in Vincent Boussard's production of Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* filmed at the San Francisco Opera

(Menelaus) and lyrical tenor Fernando Guimarães (Theseus) both seduce Helen with shaded finesse, whereas Solenn' Lavanant Linke is an imperious Hippolyta that nobody in their right mind would mess with. The musical performance is excellent, but, unusually, the real star of the show is Jean-Yves Ruf's poignant staging.

David Vickers

Donizetti

Lucia di Lammermoor

Diana Damrau *sop* Lucia

Joseph Calleja *ten* Edgardo

Ludovic Tézier *bar* Enrico

Nicolas Testé *bass-bar* Raimondo

David Lee *ten* Arturo

Andrew Lepri Meyer *ten* Normanno

Marie McLaughlin *sop* Alisa

Chorus and Orchestra of Munich Opera /

Jésus López-Cobos

Erato © 2564 62190-1 (149' • DDD)



We still await a stunning all-round version of this seminal drama on disc. To encompass fully a heroine already at her first appearance talking distractedly about a

ghost murder at a fountain you either have to be a brilliant vocal actress or a young-sounding, risk-taking flexible soprano. In the former case Maria Callas (traceable now on at least eight recordings) may not sound youthful but she's certainly not of this world. With Callas every scene – even the dialogues with her brother and Raimondo – is like a what-will-she-do-next thriller. In the latter case Andrea Rost with Mackerras and a 'period' orchestra (the only one to date but important) on Sony, or Natalie Dessay, guesting with Gergiev's Mariinsky company, are young-sounding and sympathy-evoking as well as finding their way excitingly round the notes and embellishments. And, perhaps, Anna Netrebko (DG) in a more interesting context than the filmed Met production.

Such excitements are only intermittently available in this new set based on Munich concerts and led by German star Diana Damrau. It would be mealy-mouthed to deny the soprano's cool, unflinching note-for-note accuracy. In the Mad scene every high note and every strand of coloratura written or implied by the composer has been faultlessly planned and rehearsed and is executed likewise; the orchestra has been told where and when to speed up or slow down within a milliquaver.

But our temperatures rarely rise or our pulses beat faster.

Of course, many will find just the high standard of the execution of the music in itself fulfilling listening. This 'problem' of excitement level is not unique to this recording: it has dogged rivals from Joan Sutherland's onwards. Because, by significantly upping the sex and violence of their source (Walter Scott's novel), composer and librettist Salvatore Cammarano not only were creating a matrix for tragic 19th-century melodrama but wanting more than just a virtuoso singing recital.

Damrau's colleagues are reliable if not special. The lower men contribute intelligently – Tézier's Enrico unyielding to his sister but evidently hurt by his dynastic misfortunes and Testé a weak man trying hard in an awkward place. Calleja's beautiful instrument deploys a colour and style from the other end of the century. His presumably intentional restraint – like the orchestra's under López-Cobos – contributes to a sound picture of Donizetti as an early Verdi with the brakes on. But from the pit this score needs the vim of Weber's *Freischütz*. Few conductors outside Mackerras, whatever their repertoire experience, have achieved any kind of



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relevant Donizetti sound on record. The recording quality is perfectly fine.

Mike Ashman

Selected comparisons:

Mackerras (A/98) (SONY) 88697 57593-2*

Armiliato (9/10) (DG) DVD 073 4526GH2;

073 4545GH

Gergiev (10/11) (MARI) MAR0512

Hahn

Ciboulette

Julie Fuchs *sop* **Ciboulette**
Jean-François Lapointe *bar* **Duparquet**
Julien Behr *ten* **Antonin**
Eva Ganizate *sop* **Zénobie**
Ronan Debois *bar* **Roger**
Cécile Achille *sop* **Françoise**
Jean-Claude Sarragosse *bar* **Monsieur Grenu**
Guillemette Laurens *mez* **Madame Grenu**
Patrick Kabongo Mubenga *ten* **Auguste/Victor**
François Rougier *ten* **Le Patron/Le Maire**
Safir Behloul *ten* **Grisard**
Bernadette Lafont *spkr* **Madame Pingret**
Michel Fau *voc* **La Comtesse de Castiglione**
Jérôme Deschamps *spkr* **Le Directeur d'Opéra**
Accentus; Opéra de Toulon Symphony Orchestra /
Laurence Equilbey

Stage director **Michel Fau**

Video director **François Roussillon**

FRA Musica (F) (2) DVD FRA009; (F) FRA509

(145' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live February 2013



Well, well. It was Hahn who edited the score of Rameau's *Les fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour*, the *opéra-ballet* that I reviewed in December. Now he crops up in his own right. There were many facets to Reynaldo Hahn (1875-1947): pupil of Massenet, close friend of Proust, composer, conductor, singer. But he is best known today as the composer of *Ciboulette*, a late recreation of the world of Offenbach.

Hahn's *opérette*, set in 1867, features an innocent 21-year-old orphan who sells vegetables at Les Halles, the market – long gone now – in Paris. The story is absurd but charming. Ciboulette lives with her aunt and uncle but has a father-figure in Duparquet. The uncle, M Grenu, has lined up eight suitors for her, none of whom she cares for. She has also acquired a 'mother' in the fishmonger Mme Pingret, who predicts marriage with another man, subject to three conditions. This is Antonin, a rich boulevardier, whom she gets once he has broken finally with Zénobie, who is anyway more attracted to Roger, a captain in the hussars. The only

sad figure is Duparquet, who turns out to be Rodolphe, still mourning his Mimi 30 years on.

Hahn doesn't echo *La bohème* but he does quote briefly – words and music – from Massenet's *Manon* when Roger greets Zénobie with 'Toi! Vous!'. One of the most attractive numbers is the duet for Antonin and Ciboulette in the first scene, which Julie Fuchs and Julien Behr sing with an artless simplicity perfectly suited to the music. Fuchs is a find: a notable successor to the likes of Géori Boué and Mady Mesplé, with a good sense of comic timing.

The scenery and costumes are delightful, and all goes swimmingly under Laurence Equilbey till the last act, when Michel Fau, the producer, appears in drag and sings falsetto; while the spoken role of Olivier Métra, the real-life composer, is replaced by that of an Opera Director, played by the director of the Opéra Comique. I remained stony-faced but the audience loved it. The production can be seen in Paris in April and May: sadly without Bernardette Lafont and Eva Ganizate, who have both died.

Richard Lawrence

Handel

Siroe, re di Persia

Yosemeh Adjei *countertenor* **Siroe**
Anna Dennis *sop* **Emira**
Aleksandra Zamojska *sop* **Laodice**
Antonio Giovannini *countertenor* **Medarse**
Lisandro Abadie *bass-bar* **King Cosroe**
Ross Ramgobin *bar* **Arasse**
FestspielOrchester Göttingen /
Laurence Cummings
 Accent (M) (3) ACC26401 (3h 3' • DDD)
 Recorded live 2013



Siroe has been relatively little recorded among Handel's operas;

versions by Rudolph Palmer (Newport Classics, 5/92 – nla) and Andreas Spering (Harmonia Mundi, 6/94 – nla) got cautious welcomes in these pages, in which one can sense that the positives were that there was a recording at all. This new one ought to cap those, partly because of 20 intervening years of fast-developing Handel experience and partly because it displays the heightened drama that results from a full production, which has here been recorded live at the 2013 Göttingen International Handel Festival. Mind you, some listeners may feel that the negative impacts of thunderous stage noises and occasional off-mic singing on a CD outweigh the

gains, as might the times when the performers fail to produce the kind of ensemble precision at pick-ups that are possible in a studio recording.

What seems clearer, however, is that this opera is not one of Handel's best. Composed in 1728 and setting a much-shortened Metastasio text, it depicts seventh-century Persian dynastic manoeuvrings executed by an unappealing bunch of schemers, of whom only the much put-upon Siroe emerges with credit. Indeed, it is only when Handel's extraordinary capacity to empathise even with unlikeable characters emerges that his genius really asserts itself: King Cosroe's mistress Laodice, in love with Siroe but lamenting his unattainability in a poignant siciliana; the stabbing, accusatory counterpoint as Cosroe regrets ordering his son's death; and Siroe himself, languishing in prison in a darkly expressive B flat minor aria. Naturally there is wonderful music aplenty elsewhere (including a lovely aria for Emira at the end of Act 2), but not so tightly linked to the dramatic context.

With Laurence Cummings at the helm, and the hand-picked FestspielOrchester Göttingen in stirring form, the performance is energetic and committed. Cummings has an ability to push the momentum through from recitative to aria and back again with naturalness and urgency, so that all seems of a piece. Sopranos Anna Dennis and Aleksandra Zamojska are the most impressive cast members, the former smooth, clear and radiant, the latter firmer-voiced but still bright, and unleashing some athletic ornaments in her final aria. Antonio Giovannini and Lisandro Abadie are solid and credible in their roles, and the only disappointment is Yosemeh Adjei, who, though not without dramatic strengths, lacks the lyrical ease, intonational control and sheer vocal strength one would like to hear in a title-role written for Senesino. All of which means that while Handel opera collectors may well welcome this recording for being *Siroe*, for anyone else there are other Handel operas to choose ahead of it.

Lindsay Kemp

Hasse

Siroe, re di Persia

Max Emanuel Cencic *countertenor* **Siroe**
Mary-Ellen Nesi *mez* **Emira**
Julia Lezhneva *mez* **Laodice**
Franco Fagioli *countertenor* **Medarse**
Juan Sancho *ten* **Cosroe**
Lauren Snouffer *sop* **Arasse**
Armonia Atenea / George Petrou
 Decca (F) (2) 478 6768DHO2 (170' • DDD • S/T/t)



Metastasio's libretto *Siroe, re di Persia* is based loosely on the life of the Persian

King Khosrau II, whose aggressive empirical wars against neighbouring kingdoms briefly earned him the nickname 'Parviz' ('the unbeatable') until his eventual fall proved otherwise. He hoped to promote his younger son Medarza to the throne instead of his older son Shiruya, whom he imprisoned for treason; conspirators liberated Shiruya, crowned him king, and only a few days later he executed his father and 18 of his brothers (including Medarza). Metastasio transformed the story to create a more idealised dramatic context to explore the morals of filial respect, political duty, virtuous kingship and how these can be compromised by the conflicting passions of love, lust and envy.

Hasse first set *Siroe* for Bologna in 1733 but this recording is based on a different version prepared in 1763 for the court opera in Dresden and Warsaw (Elector Augustus III of Saxony was also the King of Poland). Two-thirds of the arias were completely rewritten, including all of those for the title-hero. For this recording, a small amount of material by Handel and Graun is interpolated into Act 3 (the reason is unexplained).

George Petrou achieves an elusive dichotomy of orchestral delicacy and theatrical pace. Reams of recitatives crackle with dramatic conviction. Max Emanuel Cencic's impassioned performance of Siroe's first aria 'La sorte mia tiranna', with its shaded contrasts between pathos and heroic resolve, long-spun melodic cantilena, and subtle colourings from horns, flutes and oboes, indicates how much Hasse's style influenced the 'Classical' generation (including the child Mozart). Franco Fagioli is aptly cast as Siroe's evil little brother Medarse, whose elaborate showpiece at the end of Act 1 has neither room nor desire for subtlety and takes no prisoners ('Fra l'orror della tempesta'). Julia Lezhneva's sparkling coloratura is utilised to serve the dramatic sentiments of Laodice's vengeful 'O placido il mare' (sung after her unwanted advances have been spurned by Siroe), and later on her apologetic 'Mi lagnerò tacendo' trips along limpidly. Emira's path to happiness is far from smooth because her father was killed in battle by her beloved Siroe's father; Mary-Ellen Nesi's unleashing of the pent-up anger at Cosroe in a chain of

accompanied recitatives culminates thrillingly with the enraged 'Che furia, che mostro'. Juan Sancho's changeable tyrant excels equally at tyrannical rage (Cosroe threatening his son in 'Tu di pietar mi spogli') and bitter self-reproach upon realising his mistake too late ('Gelido in ogni vena'). Parnassus Productions earns kudos for its adventurous ambition to record a complete Hasse opera to such a high standard – even if Decca's retro-style cover of the big star dressed-up in costume is cringeworthy. **David Vickers**

Mozart

Don Giovanni

Erwin Schrott *bass-bar* **Don Giovanni**
 Anna Netrebko *sop* **Donna Anna**
 Malena Ernman *mez* **Donna Elvira**
 Katija Dragojevic *mez* **Zerlina**
 Charles Castronovo *ten* **Don Ottavio**
 Luca Pisaroni *bass-bar* **Leporello**
 Jonathan Lemalu *bass-bar* **Masetto**
 Mario Luperi *bass* **Commendatore**
 Balthasar Neumann Choir and Ensemble /
 Thomas Hengelbrock

Stage director **Philipp Himmelmann**

Video director **Jérémy Cuvillier**

Sony Classical © 2 DVD 88843 04010-9;

Ⓢ 88843 04011-9 (175' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •
 DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • S/s)

Recorded live at the Festspielhaus, Baden-Baden,
 May 17, 2013



With *Don Giovanni* productions placing the opera in nearly every imaginable time and place,

this one may be the only one set in wintertime – as if to underscore the underlying chill in its tale of sexual objectification. This modern-dress production by Philipp Himmelmann is full of handsome stage pictures bathed in twilight, wintry blues with most of the cast sensibly bundled up (Leporello in a nerdy plaid jacket), though the Don Giovanni of Erwin Schrott is still dressed for fall in body-hugging black with ample chest hair visible in his unbuttoned shirt. That makes symbolic sense because his character exists in a world apart from everyone else. Besides, who in their right mind would hire Schrott only to obscure his considerable physicality?

This well-shot, telegenic production – that unlike so many knows when to stop when dramatic points are solidly accomplished – underscores the opera's sexual brutality with pistols and kisses that are literally cheek-by-jowl. If you've ever felt sorry for prim Donna Anna, she and

Don Ottavio conquer their inhibitions this time around. The great tragic figure is Donna Elvira, sung by Malena Ernman as a creature of greater awareness than the others, dying a thousand deaths during Leporello's Catalogue aria and bringing that sensibility to all that comes after.

Elsewhere, Anna Netrebko vocally outgrew Donna Anna years back. By no means does she disgrace herself; but as much as one enjoys her full-bodied tone during lyrical sections, you have to turn a blind ear towards her coloratura. Schrott seems to have conquered the pitch problems that have seriously plagued him in the past and oozes his trademark charm. Luca Pisaroni shows why he's the Leporello of choice these days with a well-moulded baritone, Charles Castronovo sings Don Ottavio's difficult music with exceptional artistry and Katija Dragojevic is such an all-round alluring Zerlina that she walks off with every scene she's in.

The main source of provocation is conductor Thomas Hengelbrock, who leads his Balthasar Neumann Ensemble in what might be called a post-Harnoncourt performance, with period performance at its base but proceeding with a not-always-unwelcome tension between the forward-moving melodic line and highly deliberate rhythmic pacing. Hengelbrock's rhetorical pauses and wild tempo fluctuations go a bit far but, unlike Harnoncourt, he never leaves me puzzled. Even when I don't agree with what he's doing, I understand what he's after, partly because there's a genuine conceptual interaction between him and the stage action. However, the improvisatory continuo that's heard pretty much throughout the opera doesn't add much, and those rogue wind-instrument obbligatos aren't in any *Don Giovanni* score or recording that I know.

David Patrick Stearns

Rameau

Hippolyte et Aricie

Topi Lehtipuu *ten* **Hippolyte**
 Anne-Catherine Gillet *sop* **Aricie**
 Sarah Connolly *mez* **Phèdre**
 Stéphane Degout *bar* **Thésée**
 Andrea Hill *mez* **Diane**
 Jaël Azzaretti *sop* **L'Amour**
 Salomé Haller *sop* **Oenone**
 Marc Mauillon *bar* **Tisiphone**
 Aurélia Legay *sop* **High Priestess/Huntress**
 François Lis *bass* **Pluton/Jupiter**
 Aimery Lefèvre *bar* **Arcas/Second Fury**
 Nicholas Mulroy *ten* **First Fury**
 Manuel Nuñez Camelino *ten*
 **Follower of L'Amour/Mercury**
 Jérôme Varnier *bass* **Neptune/Third Fury**
 Sydney Fierro *bass-bar* **Hunter**



Bathed in wintry blues: Anna Netrebko and Erwin Schrott in Philipp Himmelfmann's production of *Don Giovanni* from the Baden-Baden festival

Chorus and Orchestra of Le Concert d'Astrée / Emmanuelle Haïm

Stage director **Ivan Alexandre**

Video director **Olivier Simonnet**

Erato ② DVD 2564 62291-7 (174' • NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Recorded live at the Palais Garnier, Paris,

June 2012



Ivan Alexandre's rigorously historicist production of *Hippolyte et Aricie* requires that singers almost always

face the front and sing downstage, even when addressing lines to each other. Baroque-style gestures are used to convey reactions of surprise, argument, sorrow, love, jealousy, grief, pleasure and so on. Sliding flat scenery enables instant changes, although Alexandre dispenses with the whistle that would have signalled the scene changes in the early 18th century. The controlled delivery of the drama is consequently unhurried and there are subtle ideas that might not be obvious at first viewing, such as Phaedra's pride insinuated discreetly by her initial failure to bow her head when the goddess Diana descends (just one of many *deus ex machina* moments, all

staged beautifully, for Diana, Mercury, Pluto and Neptune). The shockingly diatonic trio at the end of Act 3 ('Quelle soudaine horreur ton destin nous inspire!'), in which the Furies prophesy a curse on Theseus for his impudent barging into Hades, is delivered eerily by suspended bodies hanging down, but with their heads the 'right' way up (a clever optical trick). Another telling stroke is that when a sea monster appears to devour Hippolyte, its jaws open to reveal his grandfather Neptune, who offers him a conciliatory hand without anyone else noticing it – clearly the curse upon Theseus is not intended to damage the innocent Hippolyte.

Stéphane Degout's dignified Theseus and Sarah Connolly's anguished Phaedra both sing magnificently. Topi Lehtipuu seems under a bit of strain as the ardent Hippolyte. Anne-Catherine Gillet's vibrato is a little too wide for Rameau's delicate orchestration during Aricie's reluctant initiation ('Temple sacré, séjour tranquille'), whereas Jaël Azzaretti's brighter voice is ideal for the brilliant ariette 'Rossignols amoureux' in Act 5. Emmanuelle Haïm and Le Concert d'Astrée do justice to Rameau's notorious score, and Alexandre's production has laudable virtues. However, the attempt to

replicate a candlelit environment means that fantastic costumes full of greens, reds and golds (and also much of the scenery) end up appearing rather lacklustre and brownish on screen, which seems at odds with the kaleidoscopic sounds of Rameau's music, and in lighter-hearted divertissements, such as the hunting music in Act 4 and the happy pastoral celebrations in Diana's protected woodland paradise in Act 5, the chorus is incongruously miserable. Not exactly life-affirming but certainly interesting.

David Vickers

Rameau

'The Sound of Light'

Excerpts from *Les fêtes d'Hébé*, *Zoroastre*, *Les Boréades*, *Les Indes galantes*, *Platée*, *Six Concerts*, *Naïs*, *Hippolyte et Aricie*, *Dardanus* and *Castor et Pollux*

Nadine Koutcher *sop* Alexei Svetov *bass*

MusicAeterna / Teodor Currentzis

Sony Classical © 88843 08257-2 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Teodor Currentzis's effusive dedicatory preface suggests that Rameau's music

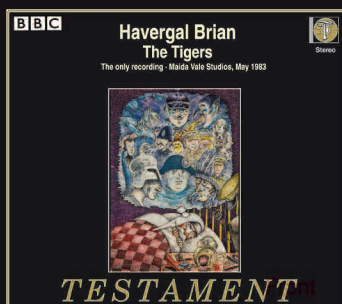


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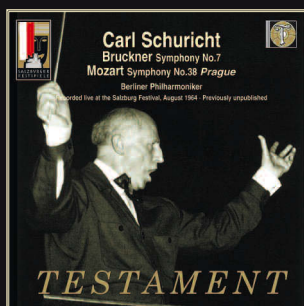
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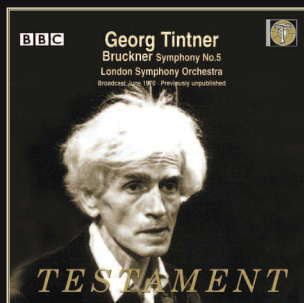
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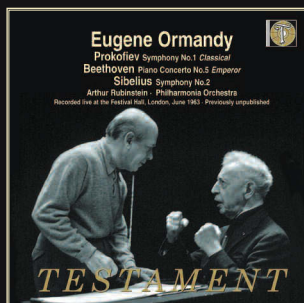
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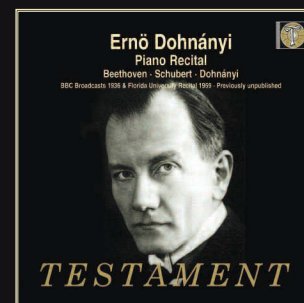
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‘radiates the richest Apollonian light. His music travels straight to your heart like a ray of sun cuts through the endless dark space of the universe until it finally hits the human eye, a green leaf, a rose petal. Rameau is the driver of Apollo’s chariot.’ Readers will have to decide for themselves whether these words are wisdom or blarney. The *Musette* from *Les fêtes d’Hébé* instantly establishes Currentzis’s penchant for strong textures and vivid moods – but the sabre-rattling aggression of the ensuing *Tambourin* invites doubts that these impressions are consistent with French Baroque style and Ramellian atmospheres.

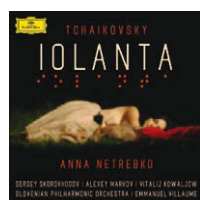
Currentzis says: ‘I do not wish to produce the most “authentic” Baroque sound’ – and he’s not kidding. *Tambourins* from *Dardanus* are peculiarly unplayful without gracefulness, and it is bizarrely wilful to play the *Entrée de Polymnie* from *Les Boréades* without rhythmical *inégales*, diminishing its loveliness into clumpy foursquare tediousness. The grand chaconne from *Les Indes galantes* is stodgy on account of a forced heroic manner. The Orage depicting rainfall in *Platée* becomes a horrifying biblical plague. Folly’s ‘Aux languers d’Apollon’ is sung with caustic sarcasm by Nadine Koutcher, although the exaggerated mannerisms mean that the joke outstays its welcome. I am baffled why Aricie’s lonely ‘Temple sacré, séjour tranquille’ manages to seem simultaneously jaunty and perfunctory, although I confess to enjoying the Mahlerian approach to ‘Tristes apprêts’ (*Castor et Pollux*) – an evocation of the sound of darkness, if there was ever one. **David Vickers**

Tchaikovsky



Iolanta

Anna Netrebko *sop*..... **Iolanta**
Sergey Skorokhodov *ten*..... **Vaudémont**
Alexey Markov *bar*..... **Robert**
Vitalij Kowaljov *bass*..... **King René**
Lucas Meachem *bar*..... **Ibn-Hakia**
Monika Bohinec *mez*..... **Martha**
Junho You *ten*..... **Alméric**
Theresa Plut *sop*..... **Brigitta**
Nuška Rojko *mez*..... **Laura**
Luka Debevec Mayer *bass*..... **Bertrand**
Slovenian Chamber Choir and Philharmonic Orchestra / Emmanuel Villaume
 DG © 2 479 3969GH2 (93' • DDD)
 Recorded live at the Philharmonie, Essen,
 November 2012



Maybe, just maybe, Anna Netrebko’s advocacy of Tchaikovsky’s last

opera – namely this recording (made live in Essen) and the rest of the grand European tour which accompanies it – will finally bring a heartfelt and glorious piece out of the cold and into greater currency. It is unique in so many ways but most of all in the sense of the private enclosed world that it enshrines. We are inside the unseeing Iolanta’s head and heart. Those dark, veiled woodwinds (echoes of *Manfred*) that cautiously lead us in, the archaic chamber-like string textures that promise well-being in the unfolding first scene. These are the first indications that this is first and last a piece about feeling, about ‘seeing the light’ in the spiritual sense.

Netrebko – whose round of glossy (and no doubt lucrative) celebrity concerts has seemingly preoccupied her of late – has never been better than here, where her head and heart are so self-evidently engaged. Her opening *ariosa* establishes the glorious complexion of her voice – a creamy, dark coloration extending unblemished throughout the range. It is her inwardness, of shared confidences, that are as affecting as the eventual full-throated rapture of the piece. She clearly adores it and feels deep communion with it – the sound, the poetry, of her native language, the ache of Tchaikovsky’s music. Emmanuel Villaume and the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra both embrace and illuminate it with distinction. How shrewd to add a French sensibility into the mix just as Tchaikovsky invoked medieval France through Russian sensibilities (and his own innate classicism). The refinement of Villaume’s conducting is a constant source of delight: it nuances and tempers even the most wholehearted flights of fancy.

The scene in which Iolanta and the Burgundian knight Count Vaudémont fall in love and most especially the moment Vaudémont at last realises that Iolanta is blind is marked by a penetrating passage for strings invoking his shock and silence. Netrebko’s response to this is extraordinarily touching, infused with a fear that he, like every other visitor, will leave her in her doting father’s protective solitude. Vaudémont is sung with lusty relish by Sergey Skorokhodov, one of those fabulous heroic Russian tenors with a sensationally full-flooded top which you just know is what Tchaikovsky had in his mind’s ear when he wrote roles like this and Herman in *The Queen of Spades*. As light begins to flood the score with the burgeoning of the lovers’ feelings for one another, the tune Tchaikovsky unlocks is almost child-like in its affirmation. ‘What is light?’ asks Iolanta. ‘Creation’s first-born’

replies Vaudémont. The thrill of these two voices locked in their musical embrace is quite something – as is the overspilling orchestral release in their wake. We are truly in this moment in the presence of Tchaikovsky’s greatness.

Every voice has been carefully selected to ensure that there are no weak links here. Vitalij Kowaljow as King René has his moment in a thematically significant *ariosa* while the preening and rather shallow Robert – the other Duke of Burgundy promised to Iolanta but in love with another – is sung with selfish ardour by Alexey Markov. There’s also a splendid contribution from Lucas Meachem as the Moorish physician Ibn-Hakia.

For sure there is, as I implied earlier, what some might regard as an overtly ‘primary’ response to the work’s resolution – a folk-like innocence and naiveté in the structuring of its happy ending – but as ever with Tchaikovsky the surface uplift betokens a deeper eloquence which all but the totally jaded will embrace.

Edward Seckerson

Verdi



Falstaff

Ambrogio Maestri *bar*..... **Falstaff**
Massimo Cavalletti *bar*..... **Ford**
Fiorenza Cedolins *sop*..... **Alice Ford**
Eleonora Buratto *sop*..... **Nannetta**
Javier Camarena *ten*..... **Fenton**
Elisabeth Kulman *mez*..... **Mistress Quickly**
Stephanie Houtzeel *mez*..... **Meg Page**
Luca Casalin *ten*..... **Doctor Caius**
Gianluca Sorrentino *ten*..... **Bardolph**
Davide Fersini *bar*..... **Pistol**
Vienna Philharmonic Chorus and Orchestra / Zubin Mehta

Stage director **Damiano Michieletto**

Video director **Karina Fibich**

EuroArts © DVD 207 2718; © 207 2714

(125' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • O • S/s)

Recorded live at the Haus für Mozart during the 2013 Salzburg Festival



If the premise for Damiano Michieletto’s Salzburg production of *Falstaff* is not exactly promising, one can perhaps understand his reasons for choosing it. We all know that this sprightly and wise comedy was the ageing composer’s last opera, and the Italian director decides to set it, accordingly, in the Casa di Riposo, the home Verdi himself built for retired singers and musicians in Milan. Falstaff becomes one of these old singers; the action of the

opera – all of which takes place in the same set, by Paolo Fantin – becomes, I think, his dream.

How, you might ask, can this work? The simple answer is that it doesn't. The switches between illusion and reality seem primarily to be a case of the director hedging his bets and plumping for neither. There is no differentiation between the scenes and no possibility to define who's who. All the characters become jumbled up into visitors, nurses or residents, with additional elderly extras pushed into service in cynical and patronising attempts to convey extra cuteness or gravitas. The various heavy-handed Verdian references – a vocal score for Falstaff, a large portrait brought down from the wall at the start of Act 3 – serve only to underline how the production's thin ideas add nothing and subtract a great deal from this wonderful work. The camera direction nevertheless points them out with didactic insistence, while also, incidentally, making an occasional feature of wobbly, out-of-focus footage shot from the wings.

Ambrogio Maestri is a familiar Falstaff and performs with customary gusto, but Fiorenza Cedolins sounds a little soupy and scoopy as Alice. Javier Camarena and Eleonora Buratto are charming as Nannetta and Fenton, even if they have to put up with an elderly couple (their future selves?) mouthing along to their duet. Elisabeth Kulman's Mrs Quickly is refreshing for not being the battleaxe we often see in the role. Massimo Cavalletti is a serviceable Ford. There's no shortage of classy playing from the pit but Zubin Mehta's conducting, perhaps influenced by the setting, is often rather sedentary.

Hugo Shirley

Verdi

Rigoletto

Louis Quilico *bar.*..... **Rigoletto**
Christiane Eda-Pierre *sop.*..... **Gilda**
Luciano Pavarotti *ten.*..... **Duke**
Ara Berberian *bass.*..... **Sparafucile**
Batyah Godfrey *mez.*..... **Giovanna**
Betsy Norden *sop.*..... **Countess Ceprano**
Isola Jones *mez.*..... **Maddalena**
Charles Anthony *ten.*..... **Borsa**
John Darrenkamp *bar.*..... **Marullo**
Richard J Clark *bar.*..... **Monterone**
Norman Andersson *bass-bar.*..... **Count Ceprano**
Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra /
James Levine

Stage director **John Dexter**

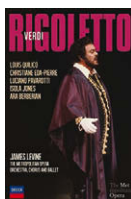
Video director **Brian Large**

Decca © **DVD** 074 3884DH (188' • NTSC • 4:3 •

DTS5.1 & LPCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Metropolitan Opera,

New York, 1981



Dramatically we're back in the stone age. No one apart from Louis Quilico's jester or Isola Jones's sexy Maddalena does any acting at all. Chorus and extras hang round in 'period' clothes wondering how to wear and move in them. Some terrible dancing at the beginning supposedly provides lascivious atmosphere. A single up- and downstairs set, variously clad, trebles for the Duke's, Rigoletto's and Sparafucile's. Brian Large's filming concentrates on the video equivalent of selfies for Duke Pavarotti's and Rigoletto's big numbers. Apart from the fact that the production gives no one anything to do, there's also the problem of how to fill in the vast amount of applause time that follows the tenor's every utterance.

Musically there's much to admire. This is a better audio vehicle for maestro Levine's *Rigoletto* than the (later) DG recording – this is the fiery young conductor who made those thrilling early opera and Mahler recordings, caught with his homegrown orchestra in their first pomp. What a pity the stage drama nowhere matches that level. The vocalism is strong and occasionally outstanding. Pavarotti has an ideal timbre for the Duke but so little interest in what the words say. Christiane Eda-Pierre can certainly cope with both a big-house Gilda and its vocal decoration. She achieves it (remarkably) by acting even less than her tenor. Quilico's Rigoletto is collectable and caught here when he was still in good voice – it's an old-school performance (an honourable man dishonoured) without the devil that Gobbi found in the role, let alone the more coloured, twisted impersonations of contemporary interpreters. But it's worth seeing and hearing. The Sparafuciles (as almost always) make much of their Act 3 scene but there's no relationship between them, no questioning of why a man and his sister are doing these things.

In general this last may serve as a symbol of what's totally lacking here. This still terrifyingly amoral work – in which the 'baddies' in power get away with everything the whole time – is boxed and packaged as a slab of poor Shakespearean period melodrama. Run in relief to almost any intelligent modern staging such as, for example, the Met's own Michael Mayer version (DG, 2013).

Mike Ashman

Selected comparison:

Mariotti (DG) **DVD** 073 4935GH; **CD** 073 5013GH

Wagner

Das Rheingold

Terje Stensvold *bar.*..... **Wotan**
Martina Dike *mez.*..... **Fricka**
Kurt Streit *ten.*..... **Loge**
Hans-Jürgen Lazar *ten.*..... **Mime**
Jochen Schmeckenbecher *bar.*..... **Alberich**
Barbara Zechmeister *sop.*..... **Freia**
Richard Cox *ten.*..... **Froh**
Dietrich Volle *bar.*..... **Donner**
Meredith Arwady *contr.*..... **Erda**
Alfred Reiter *bass.*..... **Fasolt**
Magnús Baldvinsson *bass.*..... **Fafner**
Britta Stallmeister *sop.*..... **Woglinde**
Jenny Carlstedt *mez.*..... **Wellgunde**
Katharina Magiera *contr.*..... **Flosshilde**
Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra /
Sebastian Weigle

Stage director **Vera Nemirova**

Video director **Marcus Richardt**

Oehms © **DVD** OC995 (162' + 23' •

NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Bonus feature: 'The Making of Der Ring des Nibelungen at Frankfurt Opera'

Recorded live, June & July 2012



Terje Stensvold is a relatively late-starting but true-sounding baritone Wotan who phrases the god's pronouncements well. Kurt Streit has not lost the subtlety of his Ferrando in his refreshingly straight, unguyed Loge. Jochen Schmeckenbecher similarly avoids the clichés of shouting and yelping while proving you can be a genuinely dark Alberich through pure singing. American Meredith Arwady is a stunningly rich real old-fashioned contralto Erda. Sebastian Weigle's lighter narrative conducting – somewhat in the manner of Pappano and Kempe, another ex-wind player – is at present more effective in the second half, where Wagner has a better balance between arioso and recits. It's a strong, carefully assembled cast and it's already had a good press unseen on the CD release. But seeing adds disappointingly little.

On the bonus 'making of' DVD, director Vera Nemirova and award-winning house Intendant Bernd Loebe seem keen to downplay the technical and intellectual virtuosity of this recent production. It's unfortunate (and boring) that Jens Kilian's standing set for the cycle rehashes Wolfgang Wagner's more mobile version of his brother Wieland's Scheibe – a sliced, raked circular disc with visible underlay for Nibelheim. Taken together with Ingeborg Bernerth's no-period 1960s stage clothes, not much happens to excite mind and eye.



Never better: Anna Netrebko leads a hand-picked cast at the Essen Philharmonie in an embracing performance of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta* (review on page 93)

Until the final half hour Nemirova stays her director's hand. She hasn't bothered with a choreographer for her Rhine girls or to clearly routine the gods' and Nibelungs' non-entrances from understage. But, if you watch closer than live audiences could, it's noticeable on the singers' faces that all have an exceptionally clear idea of the text – yet little goes into the physical production. Then Alberich, as he delivers (well) his curse on the ring that Wotan has just stolen from him, gets uncomfortably close to his nemesis and Stensvold shows with impressive clarity how the god's whole day (and, indeed, future) have been spoiled. The handling of Freia too is good and prominent – she's never just a doll in the background. And for the final scenes after her ransoming there's an interesting (and non-realistic) indication in staging and costume of the gods' heartless concert that the action effectively becomes.

Maybe this style is continued in the rest of the cycle but here it becomes merely an appendage to a rather unremarkable couple of hours. The challenge of *Das Rheingold* – many characters onstage for lengthy periods of time with little to say and do except 'be' – is not really faced here. So, disappointingly perhaps, it's back to older, more physically exciting stagings (Chéreau

and Kupfer from Bayreuth) for small-screen recommendations. **Mike Ashman**

Selected comparisons:

Bayreuth Fest Op, Boulez, Chéreau

(DG) 073 4058GH, 073 4057GH8

Bayreuth Fest Op, Barenboim, Kupfer (9/05^R, 7/06^R)

(WARN) DVD 2564 68880-4; Blu-ray 2564 65633-3

'Il pianto d'Orfeo'

'The Birth of Opera'

Music by **Peri, Caccini, Monteverdi,**

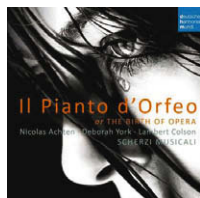
Rossi, Landi and Sartorio

Deborah York sop

Scherzi Musicali / Nicolas Achten

Deutsche Harmonia Mundi © 88843 07872-2

(73' • DDD • T)



Nicolas Achten has thoughtfully woven together extracts from various 17th-century music dramas on the myth of Orpheus, from the Florentine dawn of Peri and Caccini to the Venetian style of Sartorio 70 years later, via Monteverdi's Mantuan masterpiece (1607) and Rossi's opera for the French court (1648). The seamless narrative is organised into six subsections that follow the plot of the myth, connected

together by instrumental pieces such as warmly played sinfonias by Rossi and music by Cavalieri. The sequence devoted to 'The Loves of Orpheus and Eurydice' presents a beguiling contrast of Orfeo and Euridice trading expressions of their profound love for each other: Monteverdi's 'Rosa del ciel' (sung serenely by Achten) and Rossi's seductive passacaglia 'Mio ben, teco 'l tormento' (sung exquisitely by Deborah York); it leads directly into a lightly sprung account of Monteverdi's 'Vi ricorda, o boschi ombrosi'.

The section entitled 'Weep at my Lament' is dominated by Caccini and Peri's respective settings of Rinuccini's verses 'Funeste piagge', although they are ultimately overshadowed by Achten's pathos-laden rhetorical shaping of Monteverdi's famous 'Possente spirito'. Achten is a Renaissance musical polymath, directing the excellent band Scherzi Musicali from the theorbo, harp, harpsichord and bass cittern – as well as singing in the majority of items, and writing a thoroughly articulate and illuminating essay. However, this captivating experience is enriched by Deborah York's five contributions, most notably Sartorio's plangent lament for Euridice ('Se desti pietà'). **David Vickers**

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings

Legacies complete

Warner Classics and Erato open up their considerable archives

A 31-disc Erato collection devoted to that wonderful Hungarian-born pianist **Lili Kraus** is divided into two sections, 'The LP era: Ducretet-Thomson & Les Discophiles Français' and 'The 78rpm era: Parlophone'. Some items have appeared on CD before, for example Mozart's works for solo piano and the complete piano trios with violinist Willi Boskovsky and cellist Nikolaus Hübner. I recall the Mozart violin sonatas with Boskovsky appearing on *Référence* LPs but not on CD, while the complete Beethoven sonatas with Boskovsky are, as far as I can tell, receiving their first-ever reissue, certainly in the UK. It's a compelling partnership, with genial, sweet-toned violin-playing singing alongside Kraus's crisp and intelligent keyboard style.

The earlier Mozart and Beethoven recordings with Szymon Goldberg (reissued on CD more than once), although equally refined, are perhaps marginally more intense – Goldberg

'Suave tonal projection and effortless virtuosity are typical of Starker's best work'

was more the natural soloist than Boskovsky – but both sets are among the finest of their respective periods. The remainder of the collection is devoted, in the main, to works by Haydn, Mozart and Schubert, with a smattering of Chopin and Bartók added, many of the recordings receiving their first CD release. The transfers are excellent.

The Kraus set is a one-off 'special', whereas collections devoted to János Starker and Rafael Kubelík are released as further instalments in Warner's invaluable 'Icon' series. What makes

the **János Starker** set particularly valuable is the first-ever release of a recital programme with Gerald Moore, recorded around the time of a similarly conceived recital LP that was published in 1960 (and that is also included). The new sequence features the likes of the *Adagio* from Bach's Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C, BWV564, Dinicu's *Hora staccato*, Ravel's *Pavane* and Popper's *Tarantelle*, all of it treated to the sort of suave tonal projection and (seemingly) effortless virtuosity that is typical of Starker's best work.

Much of the rest is familiar from the *L'Introuvables* set that French EMI issued some years ago, including the complete Bach Cello Suites, two of which, the Fourth and the Sixth, are issued in stereo (the former more demonstrably than the latter). Warner's booklet suggests that Kodály's Solo Sonata – a regular Starker showpiece and another highlight of the set – is also presented in stereo, which it isn't. Concertos by Haydn, Schumann and Saint-Saëns (under Giulini) and Dvořák, Prokofiev, Milhaud and Dohnányi's *Konzertstück* (all under Walter Susskind) are benchmarks, while interpretatively similar accounts of the Schumann, Saint-Saëns and Dvořák concertos are additionally presented in later, keen-edged Mercury recordings in the context of 'János Starker: The Mercury Living Presence Recordings' (478 6754MB10, 10 discs). The Mercury collection also includes Bach's Cello Suites (though I marginally prefer the earlier versions included by Warner) and Brahms's cello sonatas with the perceptive György Sebők, a watertight partnership that turns up again in the Warner set not only in the Brahms works but in the Beethoven cycle as well.

Rafael Kubelík's 2014 birth centenary is marked by an 'Icon' collection of the

conductor's HMV recordings, which include sympathetic VPO accounts of the last three Tchaikovsky symphonies, typically idiomatic Philharmonia versions of Dvořák's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies, Schubert's Ninth and Beethoven's Sixth with the RPO, both of them chipper and beautifully played (VPO versions of Schubert's Third, Fourth and Eighth are also included), a group of Mozart symphonies (Nos 35, 36, 38 and 41), and various overtures and orchestral works (Mendelssohn's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage* is a Brahmsian-sounding highlight), including two versions of Dvořák's *Scherzo capriccioso*, the mono Philharmonia version sounding marginally more spontaneous than the stereo RPO remake. Dvořák's 'Nature, Life and Love' cycle with the Czech Philharmonic (from 1946) is well worth hearing although Kubelík's Munich stereo versions from years later are rather fresher overall. Good as this collection is, Kubelík as a recording artist would really only come into his own once installed at the helm of the Bavarian Radio Symphony. That's where the hub of his true legacy lies.

THE RECORDINGS



'Lili Kraus: Complete Recordings 1933-58'
Erato © (31 discs) 2564 62422-3



'János Starker: The Warner Legacy'
Warner Classics © 10
2564 63412-5



'Rafael Kubelík: The Complete HMV Recordings'
Warner Classics © 13
2564 63190-1



Crisp, intelligent and refined playing from Hungarian pianist Lili Kraus

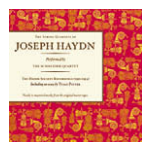
Papa Haydn celebrated

Aficionados of the art of string quartet-playing on disc have for years been waiting for an intelligently planned and well-transferred reissue of the Haydn recordings that the **Schneider Quartet** made between 1951 and 1954 for the Haydn Society. So Music & Arts' beautifully produced set, which provides just that, is in many respects an answer to a prayer. Rival mono multi-disc Haydn quartet collections of note are restricted to the spruce Pro Arte Quartet (pre-war, HMV) and the Konzerthaus Quartet (post-war, Preiser) but the Schneider line-up, although stylistically quite different to either, is supremely accomplished, their approach lyrical, robust and appreciative of Haydn's very individual brand of humour. Forty-eight works are covered, including a first release of two movements from Op 64 No 1, compiled from an unedited mastertape.

The violinists Alexander Schneider and Isidore Cohen are joined by viola player Karen Tuttle and cellist Madeline Foley (pupils, respectively, of William Primrose and Casals), though many quartets feature cellist Herman Busch, who will have played a number of the pieces with the great ensemble bearing his family's name. Comparisons in this repertoire are instructive, and not only with later cycles by the Aeolian, Tátrai, Kodály and Angeles Quartets. To quote just one minor example, the gently swaying *Adagio* from Op 20 No 5, the Konzerthaus produce the sweeter pooled tone, while the Schneiders are more attentive to the filigree that surrounds the main melody. We're given the whole of Opp 1, 2, 17,

20, 33, 50, 51 (the *Seven Last Words*), 76 and 77, as well as Op 42 and the two-movement Op 103. A pity that the group never made it to Op 74 (they would doubtless have been wonderful in the *Rider* Quartet), but what we do have is worthy of celebration. Quartet guru Tully Potter provides excellent booklet annotation but you also have access to a free download of the original LP sleeve notes by Marion M Scott and Karl Geiringer. What most impresses is the sheer consistency of the enterprise, its unwavering commitment and a thorough grasp of Haydn's idiom. As such, I'd say it's pretty well in a class of its own.

THE RECORDING



Haydn String Quartets
Schneider Quartet
Music & Arts © 15 CD1281

The Paris Opéra: a history

Attempting to survey the history of a major opera house with recordings as evidence is inevitably a painstakingly selective process but Malibran has done just that for the **Paris Opéra**, both in terms of some very unusual repertoire (rare Saint-Saëns and Massenet, not to mention Reyer, Bruneau, Février, Rabaud, Tomasi, Sauguet and Hüe) and the wide range of singers represented, largely unfamiliar artists such as Lucien Muratore, Renée Doria, José Luccioni and Charles Cambon, whose heartfelt singing of 'Qui donc commande' from *Henry VIII* by Saint-Saëns

had me reaching repeatedly for the 'replay' button.

Recordings date from the earliest years of the 20th century through to the 1960s (some recordings are in stereo); there are broadcast excerpts and, tucked in among the more obscure singers, such familiar names as Pol Plançon, Marcel Journet, Ninon Vallin, Georges Thill, Vanni Marcoux, Rita Gorr, Régine Crespin and Ernest Blanc, while the roll call of conductors includes Beecham, Charles Bruck, Piero Coppola, Louis Fourestier, Georges Sébastian, Philippe Gaubert, Jésus Etcheverry, Pierre Dervaux and Joseph Canteloube. A mere list, I know (and an incomplete one), but the listening process is varied and often delightful, the transfers mostly clean. Useful annotation.

THE RECORDING



**'Opéra de Paris 1900-1960:
Une histoire sonore'**
Malibran © 10 CDRG215

Queen of harps

One of the many advantages of recording-company mergers is the opportunity to box various sessions by a single artist shared between two or more labels. This new release brings together the EMI and Erato recordings of harpist **Lily Laskine**, whose elegant playing combines tonal finesse with interpretative imagination.

Laskine's recorded legacy reaches back as far as the 1930s, with pioneering versions of Ravel's Introduction and Allegro featuring the Calvet Quartet and Debussy's Trio Sonata, both works with the legendary flautist Marcel Moyse. Both are of course central to the harpist's repertoire and there are alternative (later) versions of them included in the set, as well as no fewer than five recordings of Mozart's Flute and Harp Concerto. Rarities include pieces by Paris-based Nicolas-Charles Bochsa, who became entangled in counterfeiting, fraud and forgery. Add exotic solos, chamber works, numerous transcriptions, sonatas or concertos by the likes of Handel, Reinecke and Gossec and you have the basis of a most enticing collection. 🎵

THE RECORDING



**'Lily Laskine: The Complete
Erato and HMV Recordings'**
Warner Classics © 14
2564 63106-3

Books



Peter Quantrill on a study considering music as behaviour:

'Listeners must be bold to challenge old blueprints in order to accommodate new visions'



Colin Anderson on interviews with the LaSalle's leader:

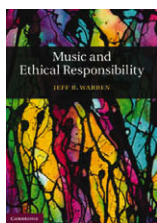
'The questions are posed by an enthusiast knowledgeable about these musicians and the music they played'

Music and Ethical Responsibility

By Jeff R Warren

Cambridge UP, HB, 213pp, £60

ISBN 978-1-107-04394-7



Ethical jazz is a term first coined in the 1990s by the former Bishop of Edinburgh, Richard

Holloway. More accurate but also more misleading would have been jazzy ethics, in which principles of good improvisation are applied to social relationships. The bassist and academic Jeff Warren works the ground in the middle with an approach that would be easy to caricature as hippie interconnectedness, though in fact it's the very opposite of 'The Muppets' bass guitarist, Floyd: 'Hey, man. Just play the gig. Never get involved in politics.'

Had Warren been aware of Holloway's model, he would likely have grouped it with other noble attempts by non-musicians to use an idealised vision of musical behaviour to solve bigger problems. Free jazz might enable its participants to 'be themselves' within a group structure but we can't all be John Coltrane. Even if we wanted to be.

At the heart of Warren's book and argument is an account of improvising at a gig, his actions and reactions at the time and his reflections afterwards, drawing on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to show that training and knowledge and first principles will only take us so far as musicians and responsible people. What's needed is a perception of self, space, time, colleagues and audience that goes beyond 'being a good listener', avoids self-consciousness and continually works to break and then reform habits of interpretation.

What does that mean for us? Warren attacks the primacy of the score, in favour of a holistic approach that arrives at the same clearing as Celibidache from the other side of the forest. His focus on

improvisational music-making may perplex the Bach-to-Boulez school of listener but he is not unaware of the pitfalls awaiting any grand, unifying theory. Not all musical situations demand the personal relationship between performer and listener that he holds as exemplary. In their different ways a One Direction stadium concert and a Ferneyhough festival both draw an audience and then ignore them, which is fine for everyone concerned.

Commercial and practical imperatives may tempt us to reify 'classic' recordings, but we should resist them. Fantasies of ahistorically 'perfect' recordings are playful but pervasive, absurd but dangerous, for similar reasons. Intermarrying Galli-Curci with Kleiber or Wieland with Thielemann is not only nonsensical but unethical, because it rips a musician from his or her time and place and reduces them to nothing more than a purveyor of work. However often musicians in these pages assert that recordings are a snapshot of time and place, we're drawn to place a burden of value upon them that they cannot bear. Warren effectively makes the point with birdsong in *The Four Seasons* and Messiaen, who wrote *Catalogue d'oiseaux* as a child of the post-tonal age. Like Heraclitus in his river, you cannot hear the same sound twice. In cities, architects destroy in order to create; in the similarly cramped mental environment of Beethoven's symphonies, listeners may do likewise, being bold to challenge old blueprints in order to accommodate new visions.

By refusing to be drawn into issues with a specific historical context (was Furtwängler right to remain in Nazi Germany? Should you attend a Gergiev concert? *The Death of Klinghoffer*?) Warren frees himself to consider music (whether composing, performing or listening) as behaviour and not language, worth improving, and worth challenging through practical experience the ever more tenacious orthodoxy that it performs no more vauleable function, in the terms of evolutionary biology, than Stephen Pinker's 'auditory cheesecake.'

The book raises issues salient to the practise of every active listener, and with a depth and sophistication of reference not granted to those hapless individuals who appear on political news shows fretting that 'we should have a debate about this'. The pity is that it does so in terms so obtusely remote from the wider audience that it should be addressing, not Warren's fellow academics. Quotation does him no favours, but a chapter subhead entitled 'The interpretive meaning making of togetherness' distils the piquant irony of the enterprise: it makes me sad but also mad. **Peter Quantrill**

The LaSalle Quartet

Conversations with Walter Levin

By Robert Spruytenburg

Boydell and Brewer, HB, 352pp, £25

ISBN 978-1-84383-835-7



Champions of the rare, the new and of cutting-edge repertoire from the last century, but not at the expense of the classics, the LaSalle Quartet was formed and led for 40 years by Walter Levin.

The book's front cover pictures four young men (the original line-up, all students at the Juilliard School in New York) in a small room, bows and instruments at the ready, eager to intimately rehearse and develop a unified interpretation. The interviews have taken place post the ensemble's demise (in 1987) and cover a five-year period. The questions to Levin are posed by an enthusiast knowledgeable about these musicians and the music they played, and also about some off-air recordings that are a supplement to the group's official discography (which is one of the book's appendices).

Levin's responses are detailed and often lengthy, sometimes suggesting that he is less than a democrat in emphasising that it



The LaSalle Quartet's last line-up in 1975: cellist Lee Fiser, viola player Peter Kamnitzer, leader Walter Levin and second violinist Henry Meyer

was he who founded the LaSalle Quartet and played the repertoire he wanted to, the implication being that over the LaSalle Quartet's 40 years of existence there was little leeway for his three colleagues to have an equal say. That said, over these decades, Levin was the only constant for the group: otherwise it was three second violinists, two viola players and five cellists; the final members, aside from Levin, being (from second violinist to cellist) Henry Meyer, Peter Kamnitzer and Lee Fiser, very familiar names to record collectors, mostly on the Deutsche Grammophon label.

New and commissioned works are extensively covered and offer fascinating insight into the trials and tribulations of comprehending a new score, and discussions with the composers (Ligeti seems to have been difficult, Lutosławski quite the reverse, if assured about how his single String Quartet should be approached). The LaSalle musicians played the latter's work 98 times, including the premiere. There are sections within the book devoted to Boulez, Gielen, Kagel and Nono, and to composers who may be less familiar, such as William DeFotis and László Kalmár. One might be

surprised that these inquisitive musicians played only one string quartet by Elliott Carter, the Second, and only three times. The reason why is explained by Levin.

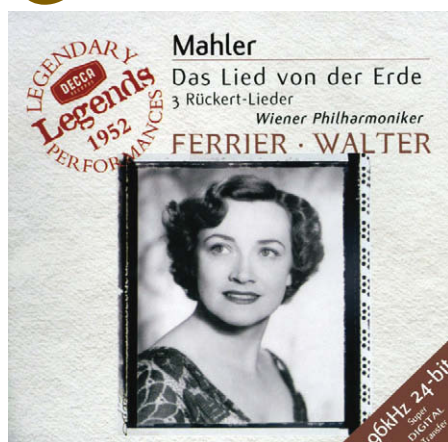
Just occasionally there is a sense of navel-gazing on behalf of Robert Spruytenburg, rather overdoing what might be considered an 'anorak' approach, yet he does bring much out of Levin, whose views on interpretation and tempo make for interesting reading. Teaching too; pupils include Christian Tetzlaff. Sometimes, though, the verbatim transcription of the discussions imposes upon the reader those asides that naturally occur in everyday conversation, and which would be unnoticed if we were in the presence of the protagonists; but for third-party interlopers like us, greater editing would have proved advantageous. I do not doubt, however, that for Spruytenburg the interviews, the transcribing and the making of this tome have been a labour of love. It is very well presented and includes 48 photographs (covering 1936 to 2012) and extensive footnotes. The appendices offer some fascinating statistics (works played, number of performances of each, commissions and first performances...)

that are certainly a major part of the publication, which is a big, serious read, if not without humour, and may be an important document for a string quartet just starting out or anyone with a yen to form one.

The topics covered are not exclusively related to music and also deal with the relationships between Levin and his numerous colleagues, his whole approach to planning and his working methods. It makes one want to explore further. Fortunately, the LaSalle Quartet made many recordings, covering the breadth of its repertoire, whether Beethoven (the late quartets) or the complete works of the Second Viennese School: the LaSalle members performed Beethoven's music more than any other composer and the most-played work was Webern's Six Bagatelles (Op 9), no fewer than 243 times. I wonder if Deutsche Grammophon has thought of boxing them all up... stimulated by this book, and Walter Levin's responses, I for one would like to acquaint and reacquaint myself with a set of recordings that have suddenly becomes must-hears.

Colin Anderson

Classics RECONSIDERED



Hugo Shirley and Richard Fairman listen again to the legendary 1952 recording of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* by Kathleen Ferrier and Bruno Walter with the Vienna Philharmonic



Mahler

Das Lied von der Erde. Three Rückert-Lieder

Kathleen Ferrier *contr* **Julius Patzak** *ten*

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Bruno Walter

Decca (M) 466 576-2DM (76' • ADD)

Bruno Walter's deep understanding of Mahler is given every chance to show itself in this carefully balanced recording with its sense of space: and one can appreciate to the full Mahler's wonderful handling of his large orchestra, in its most delicate as well as in its most strenuous moments. The charming chinoiserie of youth is beautifully caught: the glittering

oriental march in 'Beauty', and the brooding sorrow of the last song, 'Farewell', with its tragic funeral march and its exquisite lyrical passages (which Kathleen Ferrier makes almost intolerably moving) are very memorable. One's critical sense, however, has to note that Miss Ferrier is placed rather too close to the microphone, and thus one is more aware than would otherwise have been the case of a certain sense of strain in one awkward passage in the last great emotional outburst. She recovers at once and sings the last words 'blauen Licht die

Fernen' with a superb *legato* and beautifully manages the toneless repetitions of 'ewig' at the end. It is a pity that the celesta is not clearly heard enough on these last pages – one gets some but not all the notes of the arpeggios; the triangle, also, is elusive at the start of 'Youth'.

I can only briefly allude to two other outstanding things in this recording: the melancholy beauty of 'The Solitary in Autumn', in which Kathleen Ferrier excels, and Patzak's singing at the moment when the bird calls to 'The Drunkard in Spring'.

Alec Robertson (10/52)

Hugo Shirley Although we're talking about 'classics' reconsidered here, I can't help feeling there's special significance in the fact that this recording is one of Decca's 'Legends' series, and that that particular rubric seems to carry an awful lot of weight here. After all, without wishing to be too morbid or sentimental, this is Ferrier in 1952, a couple of years before her tragic death, singing the work in which Mahler himself started coming to terms with his own mortal illness, and which he began composing just after his elder daughter had died.

Richard Fairman Somehow I don't feel that morbid colouring as strongly as you do. However tragic Ferrier's life was, the events are far enough back in time that they fall outside most people's experience and memory now. The very positive message that comes across to me from a 'classic' recording like this is that great music-making lives on, and is alive and moving to us now, even though all the major protagonists are deceased. I hope you feel the performance itself feels like a living creation.

HS There's certainly nothing morbid or sentimental about the recording itself, no, which is what makes it so successful over 60 years later. And, although we shouldn't ignore Patzak in the tenor songs, it is very much about Ferrier. There's the remarkable rich voice, a proper contralto which also has a certain vulnerability at the top. There's not really anything like it these days, is there?

RF That question sounds like a challenge. How about Nathalie Stutzmann or Ewa Podles? I've checked on Google and both of them have sung the work, though as far as I can see there aren't any recordings. In any case I haven't heard them in this music. Ferrier is certainly unique in my experience for the depth and richness of her contralto. So much seems to flow from the sound of the voice – grandeur, generosity of feeling, a sense that the songs are addressing monumental and timeless issues.

HS There are other impressive contraltos today, but none, as you seem to suggest, really comparable. And it's almost impossible to separate the character of the voice from the character of the interpretation.

RF Exactly – they seem to be one and the same.

HS There's a phrase in Michael Kennedy's booklet essay, which he applies to 'Um Mitternacht', one of the *Rückert-Lieder* couplings, but which actually seems just right for describing Ferrier's performance: 'stoical solemnity'. There's also that characteristic you often get with great interpretations of not noticing any actual 'interpreting'.

RF That's probably because the quality of Ferrier's voice is already so individual. The number one way that she seeks to represent the feeling of the music is the choice of tone colour she employs. You mentioned the 'vulnerability' at the top. At first, I thought that was because she was a bit unsure and cautious up there, which I still think might be the case, but the end result is so luminous and intimate, it is like the flickering of half-repressed emotions deep within. Sorry about that – I can't think how to describe it without getting poetic!

HS It's also quite difficult to point to any specific moments in the interpretation that



Kathleen Ferrier and Bruno Walter, two of the artists behind a Mahler recording that remains moving today

stand out – as one normally might in a conversation like this – since it all feels so of a piece. Going back to that apparent weakness at the top of the voice, though, you also realise what a difference it makes to have a true contralto in these songs: the whole colour is changed (when compared to a mezzo – let's not get started on the 'baritone question') and the voice seems to fit within the orchestration differently. The effect in 'Der Abschied', of course, is especially hypnotic.

RF One more point before we move on. I would have liked more words from her. Her German isn't that clear, though I do appreciate the way she phrases in complete arcs, or sentences, helped no doubt by Walter keeping the music on the move.

HS Yes, and picking myself up again after a first listen through, I returned to her first two songs, where I have to say I find her a little less convincing. I occasionally wished for a lighter touch, and she doesn't seem ideally comfortable when required to pick up her skirts and get a move on when 'Von der Schönheit', for example, gathers speed. Without Walter's sense of momentum (even 'Der Abschied', which often runs to over half an hour these days, comes in at just over 28 minutes) and his flexibility, the result might have felt a tad matronly and staid.

RF OK, I'll give you that. And Patzak?

HS I think Patzak is wonderful in the very different challenges of the tenor songs.

He colours the words naturally but vividly – the way he weighs 'wüst' and 'Freude' in the first verse of 'Das Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde' provides an example almost straight away – and never feels heavy or unduly effortful. I particularly like his dainty way with 'Von der Jugend', too.

RF He has that old-style way of communicating through the words, as if he automatically expects that the audience speak the right language. That's how the musical world was before singers started jetting around all the time. Against that I don't always feel his voice has the same outstanding quality as Ferrier.

HS The voice itself sounds a bit grainy and short on edge, granted. I get the sense, though, that he's not helped by the engineering – I'm not sure if it's a case of the balance of the voice against the orchestra, the slight muffling of the upper frequencies (at least in Decca's remastering), or a mixture of both. Anyway, what about Walter? We've really dealt with him only in passing so far, although we've both hinted at the quality of his contribution – and that of the Vienna Philharmonic.

RF I find him quite revelatory. Every time I come across a Walter recording (which isn't as often as I would like) I am bowled over. Do you know his Brahms Third? The end of the first movement is titanic.

HS I'm afraid I don't – I've just ordered a copy though!

RF Apologies for going off-piste! But the wholehearted emotion that sweeps him along in the Brahms is just what I hear again here.

HS Certainly what he does here is wonderful, and it's remarkable the transparency and flexibility he gets from the orchestra, and a great amount of detail comes through in the sound too: those flutter-tonguing flutes that pop up occasionally; the sense of bustling, quivering life he conjures in the central interlude of 'Trinklied vom Jammer der Erde' is wonderful; the sense of yearning intensity he produces as passion breaks through the numbness in 'Der Einsame in Herbst' is glorious, and the way the lower strings really dig out their notes at 'Sonne der Liebe' in that song is viscerally exciting.

RF For me, he is the fount of inspiration in this recording because his emotional response to the music feels so uninhibited. Next to him, the other great conductors on record seem either inexpressive – Klemperer, impassive – or contrived – Bernstein, pulling the music around wilfully, and Karajan, all arty, technologically manipulated mysticism. Walter just lets the emotion in the music pour out.

HS The playing feels so natural, too, with instinctive string *portamentos*, and horn solos that would have given Dennis Brain a run for his money. You mention those other conductors, and that makes one realise how important Walter is in this performance. There's something especially moving in the way that his passionate outbursts and his sense of forward momentum contrast with that 'stoical solemnity' of Ferrier's. With a different conductor, her interpretation, I feel, might have felt very different.

RF Before we sign off we have to mention the recording. In many ways it is quite good for its day, especially the amount of orchestral detail it captures. You keep thinking, 'Oh, I've never heard that before', which is unexpected in a recording dating from the early 1950s. But, for all that, the sound isn't ingratiating, is it?

HS It's not at all bad but it is definitely a bit short on bloom and beauty, and it's difficult not to think about the sort of engineering Decca would manage in Vienna just half a decade later. But by then, of course, there was no Ferrier.

RF For this very special line-up of artists we could probably put up with a lot in the recording. Here is, truly, a 'classic'. **G**

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Music for Choral Evensong

Often conceived for specific choirs and sound spaces, recordings of Choral Evensong can capture unique moments in time and there are many fine discs to treasure, says **Michael White**

A part from Gothic vaults and Great East Windows, Choral Evensong is arguably the Church of England's greatest asset these days, and a reason why cathedrals, college chapels and other places where choirs sing still flourish while most parish churches struggle. So although its music might be niche, it isn't negligible. And although its specialist composers – Stanford, Sumsion, Bairstow and their like, through to the master of the genre, Herbert Howells – may not be giants on the world stage, they have their place. A place where more wide-ranging figures such as Walton, Tippett and Britten (who was so steeped in Anglican culture he should have written more church music than he did) were sometimes pleased to join them.

Capturing the Evensong experience on disc, though, is a problem. This is music

often written for specific buildings and the sound of a specific choir, which will itself reflect the built environment it serves. So atmosphere and space, the sense of an ecclesiastical acoustic, is important. But too spacious and the detail disappears in sonic mire.

Then there's the question of how faithfully you reproduce the service. CDs of the whole thing – readings, prayers, responses, psalms and all – make interesting souvenirs but not repeated listening. Extracting the core repertoire works better. And core repertoire at Evensong is focused on the evening canticles: *Magnificat* (the song of a young woman, Mary, looking forward to the birth of Christ) and *Nunc dimittis* (the song of an old man, Simeon, ready for death now that his life has been fulfilled by Christ).

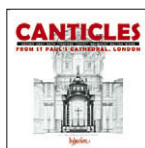
The *Mag* and *Nunc*, as choirboys call them, fit so comfortably together that they're almost always set to music as a pair. And for enthusiasts, there's an exhaustive 21-disc set of some 200 pairings on the Priory label recorded by a cross-section of English cathedral/collegiate choirs, plus one contribution from that exotic outpost of High Anglicanism, St Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, New York. Otherwise, recorded *Mags* and *Nuncs* come generally in mixed CDs of English choral music, with a commendable series on Naxos that anyone drawn to this sound world should explore.

Choosing a top 10 hasn't been a scientific process: custom, memories and prejudice weigh heavily on music for the church. But these are CDs I've enjoyed, and that will open up a quietly treasurable corner of the repertoire. **G**



St Paul's Cathedral Choir and their Music Director Andrew Carwood have to contend with an 'impossible acoustic for recording', yet they triumph

PHOTOGRAPHY: GRAHAM LACDAO

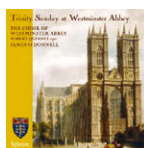


10 *Canticles from St Paul's*

St Paul's Cathedral Choir / Andrew Carwood

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA68058 (9/14)

St Paul's has an impossible acoustic for recording but this disc deals with it surprisingly well. Standard settings like Walmisley's in D minor come across in strong, incisive terms. Best of all is a spectacular account of Tippett's 1962 *Mag* and *Nunc*, written for St John's, Cambridge, and in thrall to a particular stop on the organ there: a brazen Trompette Real which inspired the composer to music that, in the right hands, can startle any congregation out of stupor.



9 *Trinity Sunday at Westminster Abbey*

Westminster Abbey Choir / James O'Donnell

Hyperion Ⓢ CDA67557

A tour through the three main services – Matins, Mass and Evensong – on a key day in the Church's year, done with an unparalleled distinction (not least from the boy trebles) that establishes the Abbey Choir as the best you'll currently hear in church performance. Howells's rarely recorded *Westminster Service* fills most of the Evensong section, with a robust Stainer anthem. But also listen out for Francis Grier's exquisite *Missa Trinitatis Sanctae*.



8 *Stanford: Anthems and Services*

St John's College Choir / Christopher Robinson

Naxos Ⓢ 8 555794 (7/03)

A key issue from the Naxos choral series, recorded in 2002 when the choir was on a serious high (with Iestyn Davies, Allan Clayton and Andrew Staples among its choral scholars). Stanford's sturdily Edwardian idiom is softened by a sensitivity and warmth in the C major Evening Service. And the G major Service, with its bubbling organ line and treble solo, has the clear, bright delicacy that it should for something so distinctly 'school of Fauré'.



7 *Leighton: Sacred Choral Music*

St John's College Choir / Christopher Robinson

Naxos Ⓢ 8 555795 (3/04)

Another of those (as they now seem) star-filled CDs from St John's recorded around 2002 with Davies, Clayton and Co blending seamlessly into the ensemble – this time for works by Kenneth Leighton who isn't much remembered now except for a well-loved setting of the *Coventry Carol*. But the two Services on this disc are magical – with a yearning lilt that takes them beyond their upfront indebtedness to Walton, and that the choir handles deftly.



6 *Walton: Sacred Choral Music*

St John's College Choir / Christopher Robinson

Naxos Ⓢ 8 555793 (3/02)

Walton's choral sensibilities were fixed in childhood, as a boy treble at Christ Church, Oxford, where the sound is relatively dry and favours crisp, astringent writing of a kind where you expect to hear the words. You hear everything in these accounts of Walton's *Chichester Service*, including the mischief that stalks the score. They come with a sleek performance of the composer's wedding anthem *Set me as a seal upon thine heart*.

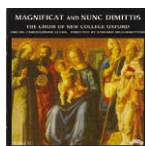


5 *Howells: St John's Magnificat*

St John's College Choir / Andrew Nethsingha

Chandos Ⓢ CHAN10587 (5/10)

A more recent John's CD from 2009, with a new director, this one has a stronger and more vividly alive recorded sound that makes the chapel seem bigger – as is only right for repertoire which is entirely Herbert Howells and includes Service settings for Gloucester (1945) and for St John's itself (1956). Balancing the mystical and muscular in Howells, they're fine performances, with impressive unison singing.

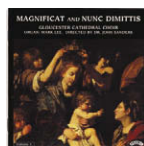


4 *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis, Vol 15*

New College Choir, Oxford / Edward Higinbottom

Priory Ⓢ PRCD596 (6/99)

One of the better issues in the mixed bag that is the Priory series of *Mags* and *Nuncs*, the recordings on this one favour upper voices and the organ sounds a long way off. But there's a sprightly Stanford in G, a serenely splendid *Magnificat* from William Byrd's *Great Service*, and diverting novelties from Diana Burrell and Giles Swayne – as well as a set of canticles written, in English, by Gounod while he was living in London in the 1870s.



3 *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis, Vol 1*

Gloucester Cathedral Choir / John Sanders

Priory Ⓢ PRCD494 (4/95)

With fallible diction and consonants that disappear into swampy sound, this was a borderline choice that made it: a) because it gives you Howells's *Gloucester Service* in the space for which the music was intended, b) because there's a lot of Herbert Sumsion, also on home territory, and c) because it's the only recording I could find of Kelly in C: the service set with joyous impropriety to Latin American dance rhythms.

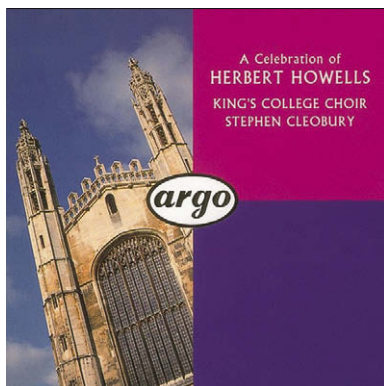


2 *Magnificat and Nunc dimittis, Vol 7*

Hereford Cathedral Choir / Roy Massey

Priory Ⓢ PRCD535 (7/96)

Another murky acoustic but better managed by the recording engineers. The repertoire is solid, middle-of-the-road stuff – Walford Davies, Dyson, Stanford (in F, with a truly funereal *Nunc*). But there's some seriously attractive singing (from the whole ensemble rather than the soloists) for the Darke in A minor. And a *Hereford Service* by the minor but interesting figure of Stanley Vann whose Christmas carol *Eastern Monarchs* should be better known.



1 *A Celebration of Herbert Howells*

King's College Choir, Cambridge / Stephen Cleobury Argo Ⓢ 430 205-2ZH (7/92)

This is a classic disc, recorded in 1989 when the choir still had the sweet, luxuriant, softly cushioned sound the previous director David Willcocks had developed over two decades. Content homes in on the *Collegium Regale* settings Howells made for King's, written in 1945 and the first of the long series of canticles that he produced through the rest of his life. They're done here with a flawless

professionalism that extends down to the last treble. And the Howellsian dichotomies of pleasurable pain and mystic sensuality are beautifully delivered.

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THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Rachmaninov's Romantic Second

Premiered in 1908, it was almost 70 years before **Rachmaninov's Second Symphony** came in from the cold, finds **David Gutman**

Despite composing in what the musicologist Richard Taruskin teasingly labels a 'new *stile antico*', Rachmaninov now looks like a major symphonist. At the London Proms, this least confrontational, most 'conservative' of his works in the form has been scheduled 13 times since his centenary year. Just two outings predate 1973. Reacting to 1924's performance, *Gramophone* regular WR Anderson condemned music which 'though it contains dozens of skilful openings, does so little with any of them...and generally spends its substance to surprisingly little profit'. Unabridged accounts were rare until the step change associated with André Previn's LSO. For older Brits it can be difficult to listen beyond their 1973 recording. Even in the United States, where Rachmaninov enjoyed a more respectable profile, Leopold Stokowski may have been unique in rendering the score uncut, as at the Hollywood Bowl in 1946 (*Music & Arts*, 7/94).

Rachmaninov's scores are frugal with expressive indicators, unlike Elgar's or Mahler's. We know he required a high degree of rhythmic definition: *marcato* is a frequent injunction. But how much interpretative flexibility did this much-travelled musician anticipate as a matter of course (unmarked gear changes being routinely favoured by native Russians even today)? Was he really happy with the glitzier, more cushioned Philadelphia style?

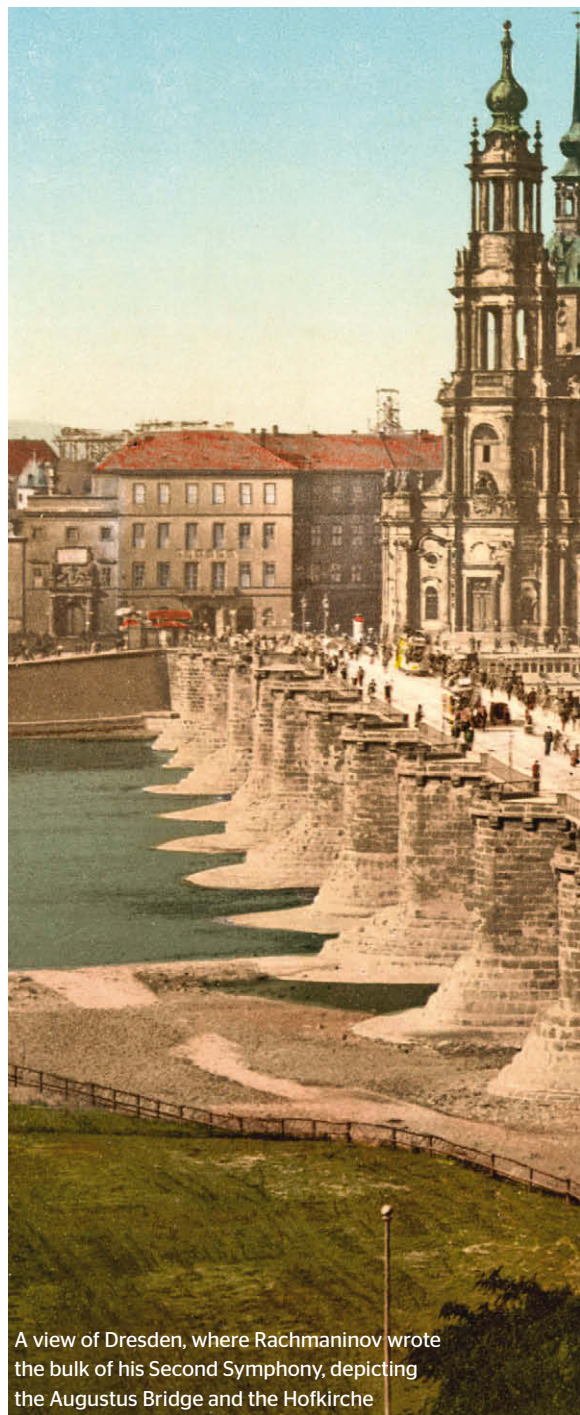
How helpful is the recent vogue for including the first-movement exposition repeat? For the composer John Pickard this nod to Classical convention 'tautologically undermines the dramatic impact not only

of the first movement but of the symphony as a whole'. In another league of self-harm is the attitude of the composer's estate which in our own century backed Alexander Warenberg's refashioning of the score into a 43-minute 'fifth' Rachmaninov piano concerto.

Rachmaninov's reception history is full of paradoxes. His essential Russianness wowed the Soviets even when his notes were set down abroad. Premiered on January 26, 1908, the Second Symphony was written mainly in Dresden. It won the coveted Glinka Prize in the year Scriabin took second place with the *Poem of Ecstasy* but, as noted by Rachmaninov's biographer Geoffrey Norris, its true stature was 'obsured for decades' by those excisions. Josef Stránský, Mahler's successor at the New York Philharmonic, claimed approval for 29 of them. The earliest recording, made by Nikolai Sokoloff in 1928 (digitally transferred for the Cleveland Orchestra's 75th-anniversary limited edition), lasts 46 minutes. Artur Rodzinski and Dimitri Mitropoulos trim similarly in their 1940s sets although, given Rachmaninov's passivity about the whole business, no standard template existed. Even the manuscript he prepared for the printer was long thought lost.

INSIDE THE SECOND SYMPHONY

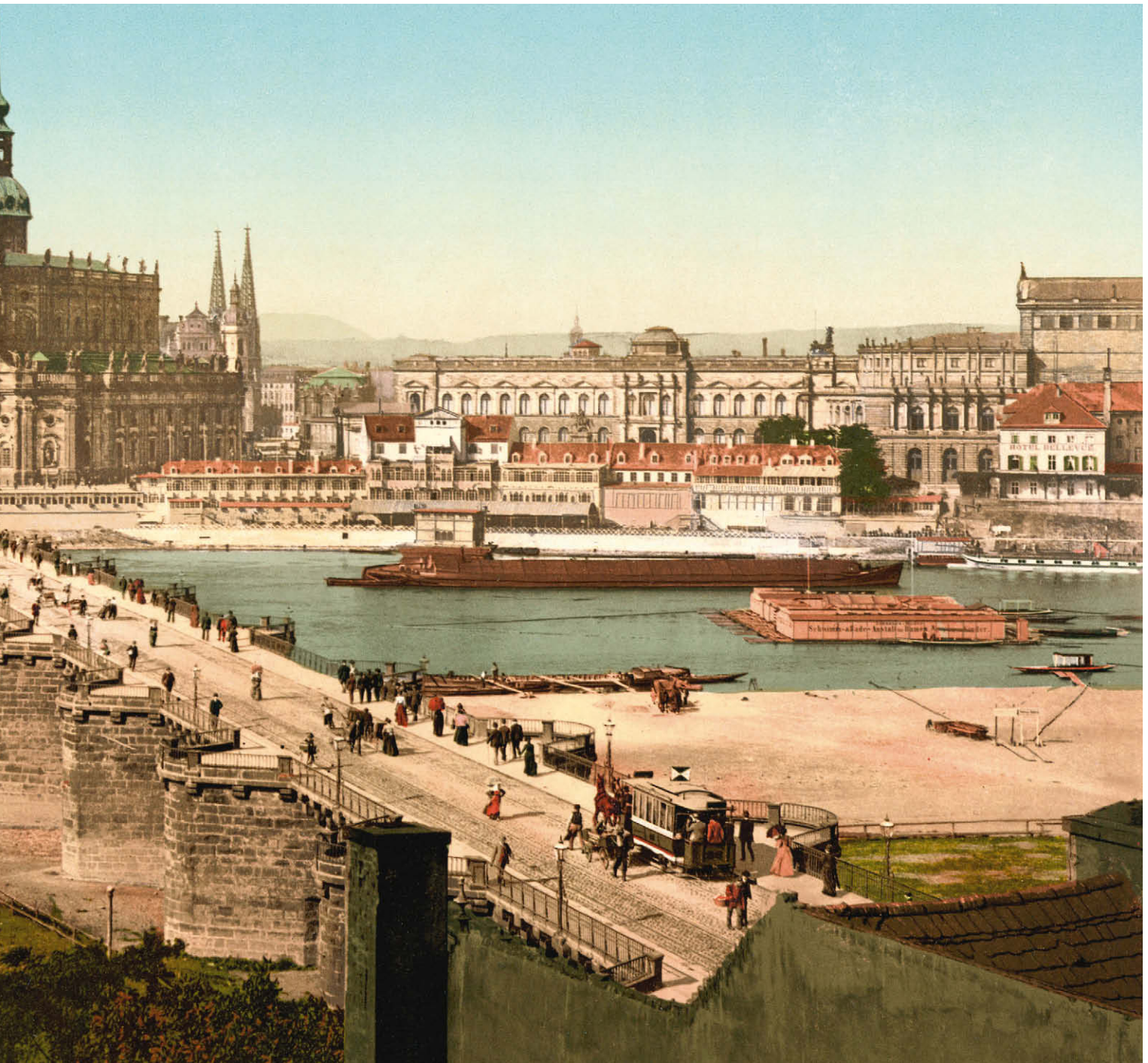
Like the First and Third, the Second Symphony opens with a motto theme, here expanded into a slow introduction establishing what most see as the work's trademark sonority, dark, yearning, strings to the fore. Recalling the bad old days, an inauthentic timpani thwack on the movement's final unison E



A view of Dresden, where Rachmaninov wrote the bulk of his Second Symphony, depicting the Augustus Bridge and the Hofkirche

on cellos and basses still resounds all too often. The argument having been initiated by those instruments, it makes better sense to end with their gruff *sforzando* unadorned.

The second movement invokes startling contrasts. A brilliant *scherzo* precedes a section whose broad *molto cantabile* melody is unexpected in context and sumptuous in effect, the indicated phrasing suggesting some degree of *portamento*. There follows a loud crash and an aggressive fugato episode, a repeat and a final shadowy harking back: an ABA-C-ABA structure, almost a third of which was conventionally



hacked away until the 1970s, the big tune coming only once. The *Adagio* was also pruned back.

Launched in festive vein, the finale continues with a march-like episode and a thrusting lyrical efflorescence determined to break the mould of stepwise melodic motion. Plentiful reminiscence leads to a tintinnabular cascade across different sections of the orchestra (again sometimes missing). When the aspiring idea finally returns in heavily scored triumph it should not be heralded by a cymbal clash. Neither is there any explicit invitation to slow down. Like so many symphonic finales,

this is the weakest of the four movements, tempting even those Russians hitherto dependable to wield the knife.

SIXTY YEARS OF RECORDINGS

A great performance should banish doubts, combining emotional and structural inevitability with a clean text. For the first three movements, the search feels over before it has begun. **Kurt Sanderling's** mono recording, expertly engineered in Berlin rather than Leningrad/St Petersburg, makes no cuts in the middle movements and two tiny snips in the first are easily missed. That its parting shot

is scarcely *come scritto* matters less when line and colour have been so magically varied. Not that there is any lack of heft in the string desks of the Leningrad Philharmonic. Sadly things deteriorate in the finale, sedate even before the *coup de grâce* of a particularly substantial cut (from 9'35"). Refusing to restore that, Sanderling plumps perversely for the first-movement repeat in his sluggish Philharmonia remake. No matter. His 1956 effort will always be a thriller.

Eugene Ormandy includes most of what Sanderling removes there but much less of the rest in Minneapolis, 1934 (HMV,

10/35). Of his four subsequent Philadelphia recordings, the most celebrated dates from 1959, its sumptuous, burnished string tone already evoking a bygone age. The maestro finally recorded the urtext in the 1970s (RCA, 4/76), a version rather less responsive to the finer points. A backsliding 1979 concert relay finds the cameras panning over swathes of pasted-over orchestral parts. With sonic glamour atrophying into a homogeneous block, there are no real *pianissimos*. Ormandy looks bored.

Analogue LPs under William Steinberg (Capitol, 6/55, and a 1961 remake for Command Classics), Adrian Boult (RCA, 10/57), Alexander Gauk (Westminster, 8/58), Paul Paray (Mercury, 2/60) and Alfred Wallenstein (MFP, 1/66) were variously truncated. Like Sanderling, Boult reprises the *scherzo*'s second theme. Back in the USSR in 1968 **Evgeni Svetlanov**, more confident and assertive, marshals great waves of emotion (steadied in his later readings) which recall the incendiary waywardness of Nikolai Golovanov (Boheme, 1/01). There is much to be said for such powerhouse music-making even if the results are garish and the slashed fabric makes little sense as symphonic discourse. A 1993 Philharmonia encounter is less consistently engaged.

The revolution might have come with **Paul Kletzki**'s 1967 taping with the Suisse Romande Orchestra. Decca's sound engineering flatters its sonority in the opening bars. However, dodgy wind tuning proves less easily stage-managed and the nervy interpretation tends to obscure the structural gains to be made from opening out the cuts. Every note is here but there are too many bad choices. Toppling into the finale's lyrical peroration without ceremony (or unsolicited cymbal crash), Kletzki has the worst of both worlds, slowing down partway through the apotheosis and torpedoing its cumulative



The young Rachmaninov in around 1900

power. Some listeners may be thrilled by the roller-coaster ride. It left me exhausted.

André Previn's first LSO recording (RCA, 11/66) is generally forgotten. Only after the orchestra's 1971 visit to Russia and the Far East were the last excisions dropped. Robert Hill, clarinetist on the tour, was playing with the LPO by the time the LSO returned to the recording studio in January 1973, appearing instead on **Walter Weller**'s rival account. Both ensembles sound committed but Previn's less frenetic tempo elicits cleaner rhythmic definition in the *scherzo*, whose big tune now comes twice with its dash of Hollywoodish *portamento*. Under Previn everything feels that bit tighter. True, the recording's soft-grained, saturated string sound is too much for some tastes, notwithstanding the band's evident sincerity and refinement. Where Hill had navigated the *Adagio*'s endless cantilena with

ease, Jack Brymer does so now with unparalleled subtlety. Rachmaninov's unusually detailed markings confirm that here at least he rejected plainer, less inflected treatment. EMI's sound engineering has dated a little but the interpretation retains its legendary emotional charge. Previn's sonically superior retread for Telarc is slower, darker, almost Brahmsian. Incidentally, the conductor did not always adopt a drastic unmarked *allargando* into the work's clinching lyrical climax. Might his more urgent Salzburg Festival relay survive on tape?

By now the floodgates were opening, though few releases retain such a firm place in listeners' affections. **Edo de Waart**'s recording is one unexpected survivor, presumably on sonic grounds. Semyon Bychkov's musically superior version for the same label (Philips, 9/91) is long gone. Other notable absentees include James Loughran (CFP, 9/74) and Andrew Litton (Virgin, 5/90), the latter an early advocate of the first-movement exposition repeat. There were two complete renditions from the unpredictable **Yuri Temirkanov** (EMI, 11/78 and RCA 9/94), currently represented by a raw, textually dodgy concert recording. **Kyrril Kondrashin**'s sonically challenged live relay is also cut.

Not so **Vladimir Ashkenazy**'s faithful studio version with the same, Concertgebouw Orchestra. This remains competitive, at once red-blooded and light on its feet, with a particularly vivacious *scherzo*, its *molto cantabile* less schmaltzy than Previn's. Then again, the *Adagio*'s clarinet solo is relatively bald, with some digital glare on the massed strings. The placement of instrumental choirs in a big acoustic seems rather woozy now. If you are wedded to physical format, be aware that the Double Decca transfer splits the work between discs. The conductor revisited it as part of his Sydney Rachmaninov Festival.

HISTORIC CHOICE

Leningrad PO / **K Sanderling**
DG (M) 449 767-2G0R



Not quite what Rachmaninov intended but Sanderling makes a thrilling case with his world-beating band.

BARGAIN CHOICE

Detroit SO / **Slatkin**
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DVD CHOICE

WDR SO, Cologne / **Bychkov**
Arthaus (B) 2 DVD 101 439



You might not want to watch as well as listen. Otherwise Bychkov ticks virtually every box.

Close-miking creates an impression of heartless ferocity as the late **Lorin Maazel** drives the Berlin Philharmonic through what must have been unfamiliar fare. And the great technician claimed to have developed a passion for the composer. There's more give and take from **Mariss Jansons's** Philharmonia in the over-resonant All Saints, Tooting. Jansons's St Petersburg version is generally preferable, his *rubato* more intuitively understood by the players. A pity the full score still comes with rough edges and percussive extras. Like the Russians, Jansons has the slow introduction start broadly only to push on with a volatility that can make the music seem less cogent. Brightly caught by a Western recording team in a Moscow film studio, **Pavel Kogan** delivers the same kind of gutsiness.

Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, with the LSO in 1988 (Tooting again but better handled), may have been the first to include the first-movement repeat. The 'Russian soul' of this distinctive reading – dark, never garish, undeniably ponderous in places – just about carries you through its 66 minutes. **Owain Arwel Hughes**, broader still, cannot muster comparable intensity.

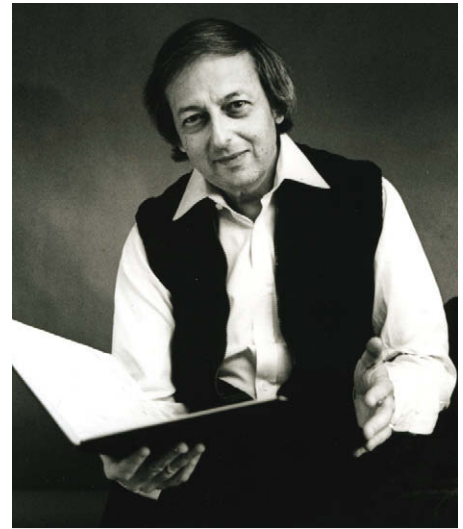
From the early 1990s comes **Tadaaki Otaka's** first account. Spacious sound foregrounds the strings, the music-making sounds attractively unforced, the finale notably well-paced. More innovative is **David Zinman's** carefully prepared Baltimore disc in which the conductor embraces a high incidence of old-fashioned *portamento* (that irksome timpani stroke is not banished). The results may appear contrived rather than heartfelt but I don't hear the slides as merely pasted on. **Lan Shui** seems more precious in his insistence on 'swoopy' strings at salient points, perhaps because his orchestra has a leaner sound. That Zinman's then Telarc label should have sanctioned blander alternatives from **Jésus López-Cobos** and **Paavo Järvi** is symptomatic of an age of over-production, of arguments decently articulated, never quite taking wing.

When in 1993 Decca sought to recreate the satin sophistication of Ormandy's Philadelphia sound under **Charles Dutoit** the results lacked idiomatic urgency (and idiomatic *rubato*). Even **Mikhail Pletnev's** recording, widely welcomed as bringing new life to the repertoire with its separated violin desks and lean-toned winds, now seems a tad pale. Almost alone he combines the athletic pacing typical of the older Russians with fealty to the score. I have no problem with his relatively swift *Adagio*. As with Ashkenazy, the whirlwind finale goes faster than the players – or

is it the recording? – can articulate with complete security. What Robert Layton heard as 'feeling held in perfect control' might come over better were the sound consistently balanced.

Valery Gergiev's Kirov/Mariinsky version is surprisingly dull. He takes the first movement repeat and adds some *pizzicato* basses at its end. Livelier if sonically airless is his LSO remake, where Andrew Marriner's almost introverted account of the great clarinet solo is beautifully accompanied, a real heart-stopper. Gergiev protégé **Gianandrea Noseda**, another fine conductor, sounds oddly stilted in this repertoire.

Little heralded at the time, **Vernon Handley's** rehearse-record version for the defunct Tring label (slightly shrill at



André Previn, trailblazer for Rachmaninov

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1956 Leningrad PO / K Sanderling	DG (M) 449 767-2 GOR (11/56*)
1959 Philadelphia Orch / Ormandy	Sony (S) ② SB2K63257 (8/72*)
1967 Suisse Romande Orch / Kletzki	Decca Eloquence (B) ELQ470 6752 (5/68*)
1968 USSR SO / Svetlanov	Melodiya (F) MELCD100 0142 (5/70*)
1973 LSO / Previn	EMI (M) 085289-2 (4/73*)
1973 LPO / Weller	Decca Eloquence (S) ② ELQ480 0824 (11/73*)
1976 Rotterdam PO / de Waart	Philips (S) ② 438 383-2 PM2; Pentatone (F) .PTC5186 153 (12/78*)
1977 USSR St SO / Temirkanov	Brilliant (S) ⑩ 8818 (4/08)
1979 Philadelphia Orch / Ormandy	EuroArts (F) DVD 207 2258
1980 RCO / Kondrashin	RCO Live (B) ⑭ RCO08005 (6/09)
1981 Concertgebouw Orch / Ashkenazy	Decca (S) ② 448 116-2 DF2; (S) ③ 455 798-2 DC3 (7/82*)
1982 BPO / Maazel	DG (S) ② 445 590-2 GMA2; (B) 478 5697 GB (1/84*)
1985 RPO / Previn	Telarc (B) CD80113 (10/85)
1986 Philh Orch / Jansons	Chandos (M) CHAN8520 (8/88)
1988 LSO / Rozhdestvensky	Regis (S) RRC1210 (1/89*)
1989 Philh Orch / K Sanderling	Apex (S) 0927 49044-2 (4/90*)
1990 Moscow St SO / Kogan	Alto (S) ALC1031
1991 BBC NOW / Otaka	Nimbus (B) ③ N11786; (S) ⑦ N11749 (5/92*)
1992 Baltimore SO / Zinman	Telarc (B) CD80312 (10/92)
1993 Philadelphia Orch / Dutoit	Newton (S) ④ 8802021 (6/95*)
1993 St Petersburg PO / Jansons	EMI (S) ③ 500885-2; (S) ⑥ 575510-2 (8/94*)
1993 Russian Nat Orch / Pletnev	DG (S) ④ 477 9505 GB4 (6/94*)
1993 Philh Orch / Svetlanov	ICA Classics (F) ICAC5078
1993 Kirov Orch / Gergiev	Philips (M) 438 864-2 PH (8/94); Decca (S) ⑫ 480 6717; Newton (M) 8802082
1994 RPO / Handley	Membran (M) 222865
1997 Nat SO of Ireland / Anissimov	Naxos (B) 8 554230; (B) ③ 8 503191
2000 Cincinnati SO / López-Cobos	Telarc (F) CD80543
2001 Sinf Varsovia / Cura	Avie (F) AVO022 (2/03)
2001 RSNO / Hughes	BIS (F) BIS-CD1279 (12/02); (M) ③ BIS-CD1665/6
2003 Budapest Fest Orch / I Fischer	Channel Classics (F) .CCSSA21604 (8/04)
2006 Cincinnati SO / P Järvi	Telarc (F) CD80670; (F) .SACD60670 (3/07)
2007 WDR SO, Cologne / Bychkov	ArtHaus (F) ② DVD 101 439
2007 Sydney SO / Ashkenazy	Exton (F) ⑤ EXCL00013 (4/09)
2008 LSO / Gergiev	LSO Live (M) .LSO0677 (8/10)
2008 Singapore SO / Shui	BIS (F) .BIS-SACD1712 (6/09)
2009 BBC PO / Noseda	Chandos (F) CHAN10589
2009 Santa Cecilia Orch / Pappano	EMI (F) 949462-2 (5/11)
2009 Detroit SO / Slatkin	Naxos (B) 8 572458
2010 Melbourne SO / Otaka	ABC Classics (F) ABC476 4842 (10/12)
2011 RLPO / Petrenko	EMI (F) 915473-2 (12/12)
2011 BPO / Rattle	EuroArts (F) DVD 205 8398; (F) .205 8394

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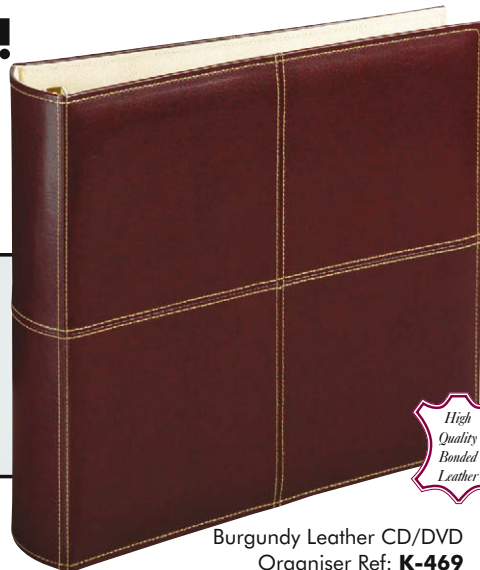
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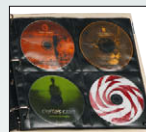
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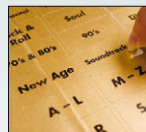
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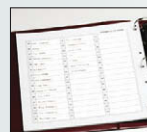
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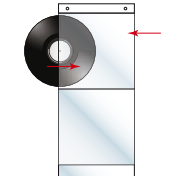
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Semyon Bychkov, whose persuasive recording is available on DVD

high decibels despite SACD encoding) is reliably humane and considered. Surely the recording Boult would have liked to make, with violins antiphonally placed, an emotional temperature pitched fractionally low and the first-movement repeat in place. **Alexander Anissimov** omits that and snips at the finale, darker and more overtly nostalgic.

More intriguing is what at first looks like a vanity project from **José Cura** with Sinfonia Varsovia. In fact the tenor has his own conception: he makes the repeat in the first movement, phrases discreetly and pushes on as eagerly as Pletnev. The upfront sound, less than natural and not always conducive to real *pianissimo*, does not fatally detract from an anti-rhetorical reading that feels genuine. And, unlike many full-time conductors, he neither compromises the first movement's final unison, nor inserts an extra cymbal crash to usher in the finale's lyrical climax. Sadly, there's no encore, sung or otherwise.

In top-notch sound, **Iván Fischer** offers a maximally deft, ultra-refined option, pitched somewhere between Pletnev and Zinman. Textures are sifted and lightened, the ear tickled by such features as the divided violins rather than being drawn into a maelstrom of darker emotions. The unrivalled finesse of the execution would seem to place this one out in front. But is the result truly revelatory or merely supremely well rehearsed? The second movement's big tune (from 1'14") would

be a good place to test your own responses. The line is peppered with discreet slides but are they truly 'felt'? In the *Adagio*, Fischer can surge with the best of them while remaining strangely dry-eyed.

Less widely noticed is a superb **Semyon Bychkov** performance from Cologne, tucked away in a DVD-only Rachmaninov package. Shorn of player-led commentary, *The Bells* and the *Symphonic Dances* are also available on CD (Profil, 10/07). The symphony is not, yet it receives a most persuasive realisation, passionately romantic as well as eminently lucid, as might be expected from this source. There is no first-movement repeat and the development has a mercurial Russian flexibility which rather eludes Previn, wonderful as he is at building tension. My only regret is that Bychkov hasn't banished the extra timpani stroke – the camera zeroes in; fortunately the sound is relatively discreet. If the orchestra's sonority is not over-rich, its playing is ardent, string lines beautifully shaped. Once past navigating the awkward menu, the camerawork may perplex. Expect over-emphatic close-ups, hazier distance shots and some out-of-focus superimposition. The musicians wear semi-formal attire in a darkened hall, apparently empty. Even from our upfront perch it's a sympathetic venue.

Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic make sophisticated audio-visual rivals. Their recent CD pairing *The Bells* and the *Symphonic Dances* (Warner, 10/13) arguably trumps Bychkov's. The Symphony is

another matter. Its less iridescent sound world gives Sir Simon fewer openings for the textural exploration he so relishes. Something has been lost since he first tackled this music (EMI, 10/84). He has every note of the score in his head but is it in his heart?

Two live audio-only options retain applause. **Antonio Pappano** presents the most romantic and forceful of recent interpretations. Sacrificing a modicum of the music's structural clarity in his drive to communicate, he brings heartfelt emotion rather than perfect unanimity to the final peroration. Pappano has spoken of a Wagnerian dimension: 'There are so many *Tristan*-esque chromatic progressions...and certainly one or two obvious *Meistersinger* references.' He even highlights some Mahlerian details in the scoring. Nothing is glossed over.

Leonard Slatkin, who recorded the work for Vox during his glory days in St Louis, takes a tougher, plainer line in Detroit. The first movement is relatively low-key until storm clouds gather convincingly in the development. The *Scherzo* is fast and articulate (particularly in transitional passages which risk treading water). Possibly reflecting the ensemble's own limitations, the sound is a little muffled, yet good enough to show up contrapuntal detail. Slatkin countenances no accretions, nor gives us a repeat.

I had high hopes of **Vasily Petrenko**, who regularly brings such tautness and fire to the RLPO. Alas the repeat is back and so is that timpani incursion. Despite his nostalgic manner, Previn feels less diffuse, more compelling than this. His template is proving hard to shift.

Rachmaninov is sometimes dismissed as easy to bring off, but isn't that mere prejudice? It's not just special pleading that prompts Bychkov to praise his own team: 'It was fantastic to see the way the orchestra brought commitment and passion to this extremely difficult music, the spirit of which is so difficult to fathom. In the concerts they played as if it were a matter of life and death.' Had their performance been available on CD, we might have had a surprise winner. **G**

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Franz Liszt: pianist Jean Müller chooses 10 incomparable performances of the composer's piano music

The pianist Jean Müller – whose recordings of Chopin and Liszt on the Fondamenta label have been greeted with great enthusiasm in *Gramophone* – offers an artist's guide to some key Liszt recordings by some of the greatest players of our time. *Gramophone* contributor Alexandra Coghlan chooses 10 pieces of music inspired by travel, sometimes for pleasure, sometimes, tragically, with no hope of return. And *Gramophone's* Features Editor, and a composer in his own right, James McCarthy guides us to 10 works written in the key of E flat major. And don't forget, you can sample these playlists yourself by visiting gramophone.co.uk/playlists

A Liszt list

Pianist Jean Müller chooses 10 recordings of music by Liszt by some of the leading interpreters of the post-War years

Liszt has inspired generations of composers and pianists, composing both highly effective virtuoso pieces for his instrument as well as supremely original and innovative works for all kind of instruments. The man himself had so many facets to his personality it seems almost impossible to do justice to all of them in a 10-piece playlist. This playlist focuses on his works for piano while trying to capture the unique spirit of Liszt featuring some legendary and some lesser-

known gems of the discography. It measures all the way from the supremely subtle and inspired transcription of Schumann's *Widmung* in a truly poetic rendition by Arthur Rubinstein to the enigmatic sonorities of *Nuages gris* (heard here played by Sviatoslav Richter) composed in his last years. It includes the rarely heard *Berceuse* in a very elegant account by Sir Clifford Curzon, the thunderous *Orage* in an explosive live version by Lazar Berman. Furthermore we hear the youthful energy of Emil Gilels in the Sixth Hungarian Rhapsody, the pianistic wizardry of Martha Argerich, Cziffra and Horowitz in some of Liszt's pianistic warhorses, as well as the profundity of Claudio Arrau in the very philosophical *Vallée d'Obermann*. To end this journey, a luminous interpretation of the *Sonetto di Petrarca* No 104 by the unforgotten Dinu Lipatti.

- **Schumann/Liszt** *Widmung*
Arthur Rubinstein *pf* RCA
- **Liszt** *Nuages gris*
Sviatoslav Richter *pf* Decca
- **Liszt** *Grand galop chromatique*
György Cziffra *pf* Urania
- **Liszt** *Berceuse* Sir Clifford Curzon *pf* Decca
- **Liszt** *Années de pèlerinage, Suisse - Orage*
Lazar Berman *sop* Idiss
- **Liszt** *Années de pèlerinage, Suisse - Vallée d'Obermann*
Claudio Arrau *Philips*
- **Liszt** *Hungarian Rhapsody No 6*
Emil Gilels *pf* History
- **Liszt** *Grandes Etudes de Paganini*
Vladimir Horowitz *pf* Naxos
- **Liszt** *Three Concert Etudes - La leggerezza*
Martha Argerich *Unchained Melodie*
- **Liszt** *Sonetto di Petrarca* No 104
Dinu Lipatti *EMI*

Planes, trains and automobiles

Alexandra Coghlan takes to the skies, the rails and the road with a traveller's 10...

In an age of Ryanair, Virgin Trains and inflation-busting fare increases it's hard to get excited about the romance of travel. Gone are the buffet cars and velvet

banquettes, glamorous air hostesses and daring feats of aviation, preserved only in memory and a surprisingly large amount of classical music – giving a whole new meaning to the term ‘motor rhythms’.

You can glide through the skies with Walton's stirring *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue*, the bustling counterpoint mirroring the mechanical assembly of the machine itself, and pay homage to the father of the aeroplane in Eric Whitacre's *Leonardo Dreams of his Flying Machine*.

Or, if thrill-rides are more your style, what about a ride in John Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*? (Though the composer himself might advise against it, summarising the work as the feeling that follows when ‘... someone asks you to ride in a terrific sports car, and then you wish you hadn't?’) 20th-century American symphonist Henry Hadley also felt the need for a little less speed in his *Scherzo Diabolique* – a vivid musical portrait of night-time car journey that gets out of control.

Honegger was a self-confessed trainspotter, loving trains ‘as others love women or horses’, and *Pacific 231* is his ode to the power and propulsion of the steam-engine. On the other side of the pond, Villa-Lobos conjures up, with enormous charm, the *Little Train of the Caipira*. But not all journeys are as happy ones. Britten's ‘journeying boy’ takes a bleak voyage on the Great Western in his song-cycle *Winter Words*, while Steve Reich's *Different Trains* tells a shockingly emotive tale of travels that can end in tragedy as well as joy.

- **Walton** *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue* RLPO / Sir Charles Groves EMI
- **Whitacre** *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine* Eric Whitacre Singers / Eric Whitacre Decca
- **Adams** *Short Ride in a Fast Machine* CBSO / Sir Simon Rattle EMI
- **Hadley** *Scherzo Diabolique* Albany SO / Julius Hegyi New World Records
- **Honegger** *Pacific 231* New Zealand SO / Takuo Yuasa Naxos
- **Britten** *Midnight on the Great Western* Mark Padmore *ten* Roger Vignoles *pf* Harmonia Mundi
- **Alkan** *Le chemin de fer* Laurent Martin *pf* Naxos
- **Copland** *John Henry* LSO / Aaron Copland Sony Classical
- **Villa-Lobos** *Little Train of the Caipira* Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française / Heitor Villa-Lobos EMI
- **Reich** *Different Trains* Kronos Qt Nonesuch

Rhapsody in E flat

James McCarthy homes in on 10 pieces all written in the same key, E flat major, and asks you to experiment a little...



What does E flat mean to composers?

just listen to the first five to 10 seconds of

I'm going to encourage you to try something a little bit different.

Rather than listening to all of the tracks from beginning to end, what I would like you to do is

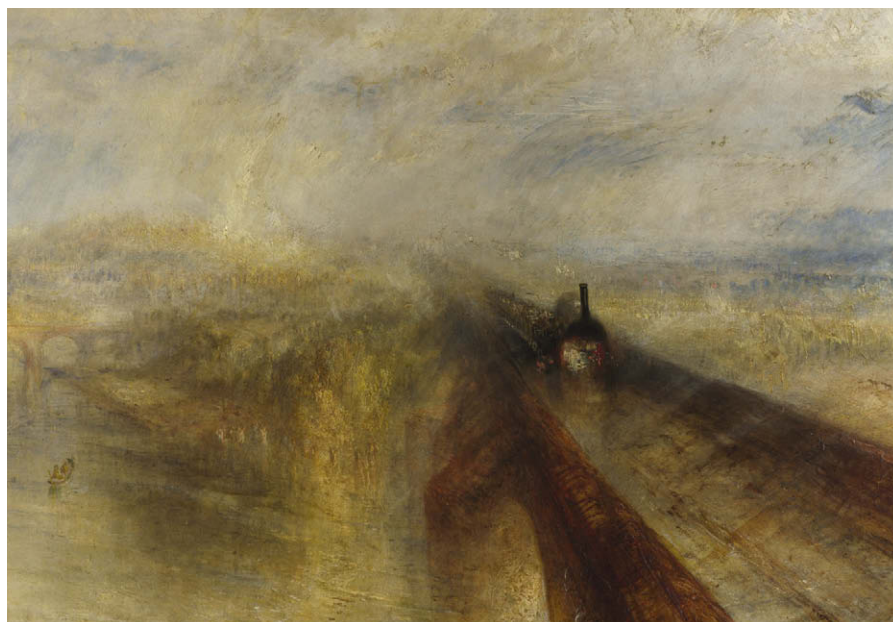
each track before skipping on to the next (don't worry, you can always go back and listen to them in their full glory after we've conducted our little experiment). I hope you'll find it absolutely fascinating to hear how these very different composers get their pieces underway with precisely the same notes to draw from. You'll never hear the opening of these works the same way again. But can we come to any conclusions about the kind of music that composers tend to write for this key in particular? In short, not really. But there does seem to be a thread of bombast and heroism running through Beethoven's approach (the *Eroica* Symphony, the *Emperor* Concerto, the Piano Sonata No 4, Op 7) and it is thought that Mozart associated E flat major with Freemasonry (and we can hear the Overture to *The Magic Flute* – that most masonic of operas – in this playlist). Do write in to let me know what you make of the experience, and what other keys would be worth exploring in a similar way.

- **Chopin** *Nocturne No 2* Maria João Pires *pf* DG
- **Stravinsky** *Dumbarton Oaks* Ensemble Intercontemporain / Pierre Boulez DG
- **Wagner** *Das Rheingold – Prelude* Bayreuth Festival Orchestra / Daniel Barenboim Warner Classics
- **Mozart** *Die Zauberflöte – Overture* Mahler Chamber Orchestra / Claudio Abbado DG
- **Tchaikovsky** *1812 Overture* Minnesota Orchestra / Antal Dorati Mercury Living Presence
- **Mozart** *Symphony No 26* Le Cercle de l'Harmonie / Jérémie Rhorer Erato
- **Mahler** *Symphony No 8 LPO* / Klaus Tennstedt LPO
- **Schumann** *Symphony No 3, 'Rhenish'* Chamber Orchestra of Europe / Yannick Nézet-Séguin DG
- **Beethoven** *Symphony No 3, 'Eroica'* Gewandhausorchester / Riccardo Chailly Decca
- **Bruckner** *Symphony No 4 Vienna* Philharmonic Orchestra / Karl Böhm Decca

qobuz

Why not contribute a playlist? To do so, visit qobuz.com and explore

the available recordings. Once you've created your playlist of 10 recordings, simply send a link with an introductory paragraph and 'playlist' in the subject line to gramophone@markallengroup.com. If we choose your playlist for publication, you'll receive a year's free subscription to Qobuz! See gramophone.co.uk/playlists for more details, and terms and conditions



The romance of travel: JMW Turner's 'Rain, Steam, and Speed – The Great Western Railway' (1844)

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PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Sir Simon Rattle conducts Schumann with the LSO while Christian Thielemann joins Rattle's Berlin band for two big concerts – and Vladimir Jurowski conducts Enescu's Third

Boston Symphony Hall & WGBH

Nelsons conducts Brahms, Haydn and Strauss, January 10 & 19

The BSO's 15th Music Director, Andris Nelsons conducts Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, Haydn's Symphony No 90 (a favourite of the conductor) and Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote*, with cellist Gautier Capuçon and viola player Steven Ansell as soloists. You can hear the concert on the radio and online, live from Symphony Hall and for up to a year afterwards.

bso.org; wgbh.org/995

London's Barbican & BBC Radio 3

Sir Simon Rattle conducts *Das Paradies und die Peri*, January 11; Sakari Oramo conducts Nielsen's Symphony No 3, January 16

Schumann's 1843 oratorio tells the story of legendary creature Peri who is banished from paradise and is ultimately granted redemption. Sir Simon Rattle conducts the LSO and Chorus along with a stellar line-up of soloists including Sally Matthews, Kate Royal and Mark Padmore (LSO Live's microphones will be in place for a forthcoming recording). Five days later, for the third programme in his Nielsen cycle, Sakari Oramo conducts his BBC Symphony Orchestra in the *Sinfonia espansiva*, Nielsen's exhilarating Third Symphony, for which he is joined by soprano Lucy Hall and baritone Marcus Farnsworth. Both concerts are broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.

barbican.org.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Berlin Philharmonie & Digital Concert Hall

Christian Thielemann conducts Beethoven's *Eroica* and Brahms's *Requiem*, January 17 & 24

One of the presumed contenders for the job as Sir Simon Rattle's successor at the helm of the Berlin Philharmonic, Christian Thielemann, conducts two concerts in January. On January 17, it's Liszt's *Orpheus*, Henze's *Sebastian im Traum* and Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony. On January 24, he conducts Brahms's *A German Requiem* with the Berlin Radio Choir and soloists Sibylla Rubens and Christian Gerhaher. In you're in Berlin catch them live; if not, watch them in the Digital Concert Hall (a subscription is required).

digitalconcerthall.com

Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall & BBC Radio 3

Julian Bliss performs Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, January 27

Mozart's sublime Clarinet Concerto is

SPARKLE AT THE MET

Renée Fleming adds Hanna Glawari to her repertoire



New York's Metropolitan Opera & cinemas worldwide

Renée Fleming's *Merry Widow*, January 17; Vittorio Grigolo takes on *Offenbach's Hoffmann*, January 31

There are two treats to enjoy from the Met this month. In the first – a lavish new staging of Lehár's effervescent operetta from Broadway director and choreographer Susan Stroman – Sir Andrew Davis conducts a strong cast including Nathan Gunn, Thomas Allen and Renée Fleming. In the second – a wild, kaleidoscopic production of Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann* – charismatic tenor Vittorio Grigolo takes on the eponymous tortured poet and unwitting adventurer; Hibla Gerzmava, Erin Morley and Christine Rice sing the three heroines; and Thomas Hampson portrays the shadowy four villains. Catch both performances live in HD at a cinema near you, or thereafter online.

metopera.org

performed here by British clarinetist Julian Bliss and accompanied by Sinfonia Viva under Andrew Gourlay. The concert opens with Mendelssohn's *Ruy Blas* Overture and concludes with Brahms's final symphony, the Fourth. The programme is broadcast live on Radio 3.

trch.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

Royal Opera House & cinemas worldwide

Jonas Kaufmann stars in *Andrea Chénier*, January 29

Jonas Kaufmann and Eva-Maria Westbroek star in Umberto Giordano's passionate drama of liberty and love during the French Revolution. Conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano and directed by David McVicar, this new production is screened live at approximately 1000 cinemas in more than 30 countries, giving opera lovers worldwide the chance to experience the unique atmosphere of the Royal Opera House.

roh.org.uk; roh.org.uk/cinemas

Manchester's Bridgewater Hall & BBC Radio 3

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet plays Liszt's Piano Concerto No 2, January 31

Charismatic pianist Jean-Efflam Bavouzet pushes his instrument to its limits in Franz Liszt's fiery Second Piano Concerto. He's accompanied by the BBC Philharmonic under Gianandrea Noseda, who also perform

Beethoven's Symphony No 8 and, to conclude the programme, Saint-Saëns's *Organ* Symphony No 3 with organist Jonathan Scott. The concert is broadcast live on Radio 3.

bridgewater-hall.co.uk; bbc.co.uk/radio3

London's Royal Festival Hall

Vladimir Jurowski conducts Enescu's Symphony No 3, February 7

A rare opportunity to hear George Enescu's Third Symphony – written at the height of the First World War – as Vladimir Jurowski conducts the LPO. And check out the website of the Romanian Cultural Institute for details of a public discussion of the life and music of Enescu scheduled to run ahead of the concert in late January with Enescu's biographer Sir Noel Malcolm on the panel.

lpo.org.uk; www.icr-london.co.uk

Glasgow City Halls & BBC Radio 3

Ilan Volkov conducts Glazunov's *The Seasons*, February 5

One of Imperial Russia's forgotten treasures, *The Seasons* by Alexander Glazunov is a glittering, colourful masterpiece. Ilan Volkov brings his trademark flair to an all-Russian programme that also includes Mussorgsky's *Songs and Dances of Death* and Shostakovich's music for the film *King Lear*. The concert is broadcast live on Radio 3.

glasgowconcerthalls.com; bbc.co.uk/radio3



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THIS MONTH Naim's first all-in-one system, a novel CD/streaming solution from Yamaha and my round-up of 2014's best audio products.

Andrew Everard
Audio Editor

JANUARY TEST DISCS



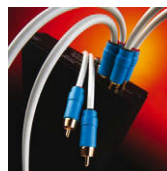
You wait ages for a Mozart Requiem and then several come along at once. This one from Bach Collegium Japan on BIS sounds wonderful in SACD.



John Butt's recording of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* is served well by very high-quality sound in 192kHz/24-bit, available for download from Linn.

From wireless speakers to new cables

More ways to listen, including an all-in-one soundbar from a well-known British name



Arcam has become the latest company to add a soundbar to its range but the company says this isn't a speaker solely designed to improve the sound of your TV. Rather the £800 Solo bar **1** has been designed to perform just as well with music, whether played into the speaker via its digital or analogue inputs, or wirelessly via Bluetooth with aptX. It also has four HDMI inputs for AV sources and comes complete with a remote control and a set-up microphone. Housed in low-resonance aluminium, the Solo bar has six drive units and 100W of amplification, and can be used with Arcam's optional Solo sub subwoofer, which sells for £500 and uses a 25cm downward-firing drive unit driven by a 300W amplifier.

Also wireless is the new Dynaudio Focus XD speaker range **2**, which comprises three models: one compact and two floorstanding. All have built-in digital active amplification, with 150W for each drive unit, can accept high-resolution audio sources at up to 24-bit/192kHz, and have an integrated wireless receiver. In addition, the speakers have conventional digital inputs and also an analogue input, meaning one only needs to add a source component to create a complete system. Alternatively, that wireless input can be used with the Dynaudio Hub, to which sources are connected and which then transmits wirelessly to the speakers. Dynaudio

UK has also announced that it has been appointed as distributor for the German T+A range, which includes the recently launched PDP 3000 HV SACD player, and the promise of 'significant launches' across the range next year.

Also launching new speakers is distributor Anthem AVS, which is introducing the Prestige range **3** from Canadian manufacturer Paradigm. The speakers use the company's Perforated Phase-Aligning Tweeter Lens, which protects the delicate aluminium dome tweeter, simultaneously acting as a Phase Plug blocking out-of-phase frequencies, and handcrafted midrange and bass drivers. The non-resonant cabinets are wrapped in a choice of four real wood finishes: walnut and black walnut satin, and high-gloss 'midnight cherry' or piano black at a price premium. The range starts with the Prestige 15B standmount speaker, from £1599/pr, and goes up to the 95F floorstander, at £4999/pr, and there are also two dedicated centre-channel speakers.

Roksan has launched the latest generation of its Kandy range, the K3 series **4**. The K3 units are £1250 each and come in a choice of new finishes: charcoal, opium and anthracite. The K3 amplifier has five line inputs, a moving magnet phono stage and aptX

Bluetooth for streaming from tablets, smartphones and computers. The amplifier uses a symmetrical layout for optimal soundstaging; and new op-amps, audio and power supply circuits and high-power output relays are used to ensure reliability. The K3 CD player also uses new circuitry and improved components, and the two can be driven using an all-new system remote handset.

New from The Chord Company is the C-line interconnect **5**, at £45 the most affordable cable to date to use elements of the company's Tune ARAY technology. Originally designed for Chord's flagship Sarum interconnect, the ARAY technology has now trickled down to this entry-level cable. Chord has been working with a supplier on C-line for over a year; and, while the new cable isn't handbuilt by Chord but instead made to the company's specification by an outside supplier in order to keep costs down, every one will be hand-tested at Chord HQ before it's packaged for sale.

Finally this month, Quad's Vena integrated amplifier **6** is now available in the promised range of premium finishes. The amplifier, which has both digital and analogue inputs as well as aptX Bluetooth, is available in standard Lancaster grey at £600, or in piano black, piano white and rosewood for an extra £100. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Mu-so by Naim

Accomplished all-in one system well worth the wait

Even by Naim standards, the mu-so has been a while coming: it was at the Bristol Sound and Vision show back in February that Naim MD Paul Stephenson cornered me and said ‘We’ve got something we’re working on – I’d like you to take a listen sometime soon.’ It turned out to be an all-in-one system with UPnP streaming, Bluetooth, Apple AirPlay and Spotify, housed in a wide, silver enclosure the whole of the front of which was taken up with drive units.

Digital amplification; only available in silver (at least so far) and with a choice of brightly-coloured optional front grilles; made in China; sold in the likes of Apple Stores and John Lewis as well as Naim dealers – unsurprisingly, news of mu-so attracted what was at best a mixed reception from the Naim faithful.

Even worse, the green illuminated logo was gone, replaced by the white version first seen on the range-topping Statement amplifier system, not to mention the lack of any power supply upgrade options or chances to use the company’s famously inflexible cables.

But as both Stephenson and Sales Director Doug Graham told me at the time the product was first launched, Naim isn’t in any way abandoning its core buyers in favour of those able to afford Statement, nor for those who would never even consider a separates hi-fi system: instead, it’s spreading the appeal, and hopefully the awareness, of the brand by getting it in new outlets, and thus in front of those who’d otherwise not even be aware of this.

And why the manufacture in China? Graham was very clear: there would be

little point in insisting on making the product in the UK if that meant it sold for £1500 or £2000, rather than its £895 tag. To reinforce the point, both Stephenson and project leader Trevor Wilson – who’s also in charge of the company’s network audio R&D – emphasised that Naim had spent a long time searching for a Chinese manufacturer not only able to meet its quality standards but also satisfy ethical requirements.

One of the benefits of the extensive use of DSP (digital signal processing) in

‘It’s fast, exciting, goes deep and hits hard when required, with bags of level available’

mu-so is that it’s possible to keep tweaking and tuning the sound without the need to change the physical design of the product, but then one of the disadvantages is that it can be hard to know when to stop: at one point I was told, ‘Well, it’s going into the shops in late September, so it’s likely there will be revisions right up to that date – but then the benefit is that all will happen is that the unit will go into an “update from the Internet” routine when switched on.’

So, what is mu-so? I’ve already mentioned some of the features but what will be most unexpected to those familiar with Naim’s usual ‘black boxes’ is that the silver-clad mu-so is just a shade under 63cm wide, 12cm tall and 25.6cm deep. It appears to float above the shelf on which it sits, thanks to a transparent acrylic base, to the left-hand end of which is the white illuminated Naim logo – you can turn off this if required –



MU-SO BY NAIM

Type Network audio system

Price £895

Inputs UPnP, AirPlay, Bluetooth (with aptX), Spotify and Internet radio via wired Ethernet or Wi-Fi, USB/iOS, Naim multiroom

Digital input Optical (TOSLink), 24-bit/96kHz max

Analogue input Stereo 3.5mm jack

Audio formats WAV/FLAC/AIFF to 24-bit/192kHz, ALAC (Apple Lossless) to 24bit/96kHz, MP3/AAC to 48kHz, 320kbit (16 bit), OGG and WMA up to 48kHz (16bit), Bluetooth SBC, AAC and aptX, All formats limited to 48Kz max via wireless

Speakers dual three-way, driven actively Amplification 6x75W into 8 ohms

Accessories supplied Remote handset (control also possible via Android/iOS apps on smartphones and tablets)

Dimensions (HxWxD) 62.8x12x25.6cm

naimaudio.com

while to the rear is a finned heatsink running the whole length of the enclosure.

The only visible connections are a 3.5mm analogue audio input and a USB Type-A connector for portable devices on the right-hand end panel, along with a ‘pinhole’ button to reset the system and also allow it to ‘inherit’ home Wi-Fi settings from a connected iPad or iPhone. The Wi-Fi system uses an embedded diversity antenna to ensure optimal reception without an external ‘twig’ (or miniature rubber truncheon!).

The rest of the connections – mains, optical digital audio in and wired Ethernet

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SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The Naim may be an all-in-one solution, but some sensible additions can enhance performance

WD MYCLOUD

There's no shortage of Network Attached Storage devices to store your music collection, but the WD MyCloud is one of the simplest to use. Prices start from around £100.



ASUS MEMO PAD 7

You can operate mu-so, and stream music from, a wide range of smartphones and tablets. I bought this Asus MeMo Pad 7 for just under £200, and it does the job very well with Naim's new Android app



– are recessed into the righthand end of the base, so cables come out of the unit and away to the rear out of sight, while a similar opening at the lefthand end forms the mouth of the reflex tuning port.

The amplification and speaker system here is a dual three-way design, using a 'racetrack' oval bass unit, a dome tweeter and a conventional midband driver for each channel, with each driver having its own channel of amplification, delivering 75W into 8 ohms.

The tweeter for each channel is mounted between the bass and midrange drivers, Wilson explaining this arrangement was arrived at after extensive listening to various designs: 'It simply gave us a better, more spacious stereo sound'. The same process informed the use of conventional drivers rather than, say, Balanced Mode Radiators. That enclosure is wood under the metal skin, also in the cause of better sound, and while the standard grille is black, a choice of 'Vibrant Red', 'Deep Blue' or 'Burnt Orange' is available at £69.95.

Wilson also explained that the amplifiers here are working well within their limits, so the tweeters aren't seeing anything like 75W: 'the amplification is all dialled back and operating well within its comfort zone – it's all about ensuring reliability.'

The DSP uses Naim-written code on a 32-bit chip, and offers a choice of two boundary gain settings – one when mu-so is used within 25cm of a wall, the other for more 'free space' usage – and a subtle but effective loudness switch, thus giving a total of four 'balances'.

PERFORMANCE

Controlling mu-so is an innovative contactless touch panel, using a light-based photo-interrupter system to detect and transfer settings, chosen in the quest for reliability but also to add to the tactile appeal of the system. A simple remote handset is also provided, and there are new mu-so control apps for both iOS and Android devices, which will also 'drive' Naim's Uniti products and ND series of network music players in place of the long-running n-Stream iOS app, but mu-so isn't back-compatible with n-Stream.

Both apps are very well sorted – the Android one will please users of other

Naim devices who have been waiting for an alternative to the iOS version – and have some nice touches.

Used with a network music source, such as a NAS or computer share, mu-so will play WAVs and FLACs up to 24-bit/192kHz, and Apple Lossless/ALAC up to 24/96, of course offers gapless playback with these formats, and will also play a wide variety of lower-bitrate content, including Internet radio and Spotify.

I'm no great fan of Spotify, but it sounds as good through mu-so as I have ever heard it, using the Spotify Connect option available with a Spotify Premium account to allow the user to select the music then have mu-so fetch and play it, rather than having to stream it via a tablet or smartphone.

The warm, sweet and yet detailed balance of mu-so, allied to its decent drive and kick, seems to flatter Spotify streams and Internet radio alike: I lost far too many hours one afternoon enjoying a wide range of music from the Netherlands-based AVRO stable of high-quality Internet music stations.

It's fast, exciting, goes deep and hits hard when required, with bags of level available without any sign of distortion creeping in, and no sign of the kind of buzzes and rattles sometimes apparent when lesser speakers of this kind are pushed hard.

Play the (whisper it) Linn Records release of the Mozart Requiem, performed by the Dunedin Consort, and the Naim system makes a fine job of the 24-bit/192KHz recording, conveying both the sweep of the performance and much of the detail within it.

Yes, the bass can be a bit overbearing if you get the DSP settings wrong, becoming a bit ploddy and one-note if you set the system with loudness on and shove the system against a wall with the '25cm or more' setting selected, but the four settings – distance and loudness on/off – give more than enough control to allow things to be tightened up and order restored.

True, the purist might get a tighter and better-defined sound using the likes of a Naim UnitiQute or UnitiLite paired with some decent £500ish speakers, but such a set-up is going to cost a lot more than mu-so, and offer a lot less of the style and clever thinking apparent in this system.

Or you could try...

Mu-so is a fairly unique product at this price level, and most rivals are more expensive, offer less functionality, or require you to add speakers.

Marantz M-CR603



The Marantz M-CR603 is a more affordable alternative, offering as it

does CD, DAB/FM/Internet radio, streaming and Apple AirPlay, with Bluetooth available as an optional extra. Yes, you'll have to add a pair of speakers, but with suitable partners starting from as little as £100, adding them to the £500 Marantz will create an extremely good little system if you're looking for something more conventional than mu-so.

marantz.co.uk

Caruso Blu system



Rather more ambitious than mu-so is the £3000 Caruso Blu system from German

company T+A, which combines an all-in-one system, complete with built-in speakers, with a Blu-ray player. It will of course also play CDs and DVDs, and has built in Ethernet streaming (for which it supports files up to 192kHz/32-bit), DAB.FM/Internet radio and Bluetooth connectivity. Three 50W amplifiers drive five speakers including a subwoofer, and you can expand the system with addition of a pair of active speakers or a conventional power amplifier and speakers.

taelektroakustik.de

Best of all is that, used as intended, mu-so manages to pull off the trick of letting the listener forget the hardware and instead allow themselves to be carried along with the music being played, so persuasively does it deliver everything from low-bitrate Internet radio to hi-res downloads.

In fact, mu-so is almost invisible Naim hi-fi, so well does the system blend into the room. Who ever thought they'd see 'invisible' and 'Naim' in the same sentence? **G**

● REVIEW YAMAHA CD-N301

Welcome to the network

An excellent new entry-level network CD player

As you may have gathered, there's something of a divide in the audio community between those for whom CDs remain the listening medium of choice, and those either storing music on a computer for playback either locally or over a home network, or streaming it from an online service.

CD, network music playback and streaming can all coexist, so wouldn't it be good to have a single source component able to fulfil all these functions, and to which one needs only add amplification and speakers? That's just what Yamaha's CD-N301 offers: for just under £300, it's not just a slimline Yamaha CD player but also a network music player, an internet radio receiver and a Spotify Connect client. If you happen to be in Australia, New Zealand or the USA it's also compatible with Pandora. Oh, and for good measure it also has Apple AirPlay built in, to stream audio from iOS portable devices and computers running iTunes.

Network connectivity is via wired Ethernet as standard, and indeed this is recommended for streaming 192kHz/24-bit content, which is the maximum the Yamaha can handle. Alternatively, it's possible to connect it wirelessly to a Wi-Fi network using Yamaha's optional TWA-10 wireless adapter, which is about £60. This is powered from a USB socket on the rear of the CD-N301 and plugs into the Ethernet port. Control of the Yamaha is via a well-designed remote handset but if you're going beyond the most basic CD functions I'd suggest you use the new Yamaha AV App Navi or NP Controller App on either an iOS or Android tablet or smartphone, as these give better operability when using network streaming, internet radio and so on.

The CD-N301 is available in silver or black, and built to the usual high Yamaha standards, with a beautifully finished aluminium front panel with 'hairline' brushing and crisp, positive control actions. Under the lid there are separate power supplies for CD and network operations, signal paths are kept as short as possible, and digital-to-analogue conversion is in the hands of a 192kHz/32-bit Burr-Brown chipset.



YAMAHA CD-N301

Type Network CD player

Price Typically £299

Source options CD, playback from computer or NAS via DLNA, internet radio, Spotify Connect, Pandora (where available), Apple AirPlay

Playback formats WAV/FLAC to 192kHz/24-bit and MP3/AAC/WMA to 48kHz/16bit via DLNA; 44.1kHz/16-bit PCM; and MP3/WMA to 48kHz/16-bit from CD/CD-R/CD-RW

Outputs Analogue stereo, optical/coaxial digital

Other connections Ethernet, Wi-Fi (with optional adapter), USB (charging/power only)

Accessories supplied Remote handset (optional control via Yamaha App Navi or NP Controller App on Android or iOS devices)

Finishes Black or silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.5x8.6x26cm

yamaha.com

'A highly attractive prospect as a CD player, for which alone it would be good value at its price'

Conventional RCA phono analogue outputs are provided, along with optical and electrical/coaxial digital outs: the digital outputs and display are turned off when the unit is placed in 'Pure Direct' mode for the best possible sound. Finally, an automatic power off function can shut down the player if it's left powered up with nothing playing for a period of time; this is selectable in the set-up menu, where it's also possible to set 'Network Standby', enabling it to be started up from a control app.

PERFORMANCE

Setting up the various functions here was simple: a couple of taps on the Navi app and it found the player, while the network playback and internet radio work with a speed and clarity to put many a network AV receiver to shame. Spotify Connect was

similarly simple – launch the Spotify app on a smartphone or tablet, choose the Yamaha as the speaker in use, and the CD player/receiver connects direct to the Spotify servers and does all the heavy lifting, which is good for the battery in your portable device.

I came to the Yamaha having recently been listening to the company's CD-S2100 player, and while this machine doesn't quite have the bass weight or detail retrieval of that player – which after all sells for more than five times the CD-N301's price and doesn't have the network capability – it's clear it's descended from the same Yamaha DNA, and it's capable of similar easy-going, enjoyable sound. That makes it a highly attractive prospect as a CD player, for which alone it would be good value at its price; given the other functionality built-in here, it's something of a bargain.

Unlike some players at this level of the market, the Yamaha doesn't go for a hyped-up sound in order to sound more 'exciting' (a bit like those compressed recordings designed to do the same thing), but rather keeps things calm and smooth, while still having some clout in reserve when the music gets a little more frenetic. That does mean the sound is subjectively rather warmer and less bright in the treble than that of some price-comparable CD players – Yamaha calls its presentation 'Natural Sound' – but I'm willing to bet most classical music listeners will prefer this to the rather more abrasive alternative.

Instruments are delivered with fine body and weight, but also decent bite and impact; and while there's good detailing in vocal and instrumental timbres, the way this relatively inexpensive player conveys the scale and power of a full orchestra is highly impressive. That's as true when streaming high-resolution music over a home network as when playing CDs, and while Spotify, internet radio and AirPlay have their limitations, the Yamaha's slightly warm balance does a good job of masking these and making the sound more listenable.

The CD-N301 is excellent value: it's not quite the only player of its kind, as Onkyo has a similar model in its C-N7050, but for anyone considering a first step in network music it's a convenient and space-saving solution. ●

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CEDIA

The best of a year of audio

If the hi-fi industry is struggling, clearly no one told the hi-fi industry

Every year, it seems, we hear that this will be the one in which the hi-fi industry implodes, as consumers opt to stream their music to loudspeakers direct from their tablets or smartphones, and streaming music services hammer the final nail into the coffin of the CD.

Well, 2014 wasn't the year in which that happened. Instead there was plenty to interest the audio and music enthusiast, and thankfully there was never a point where I found myself struggling to find product for these pages. Instead, my main problem was trying to find a way to cram in everything I wanted to cover!

However, it took until this issue to be able to test one of the year's most eagerly anticipated products. Mu-so by Naim is the Salisbury company's latest arrival and its most innovative on many levels. An all-in-one network music system with wired and wireless network streaming, aptX Bluetooth, AirPlay and Spotify Connect, it's also the first Naim product not to be made in the Wiltshire factory.

Instead it's assembled in China under close supervision from the people at Naim, and uses six drive units powered by 450W of amplification, all controlled by Digital Signal Processing to allow mu-so to deliver the kind of sound you might only expect to be available from hi-fi separates. If there's a star product of the year, mu-so is it.

Back at the beginning of the year, another all-in-one system was featured in these pages, and from another celebrated British name. The ATC SIACD combines a CD player, digital-to-analogue converter and amplifier to create a 'just add speakers' system in a compact form but without compromising performance. If you want something more than a run-of-the-mill micro-system, would like your system to be handbuilt in Britain and can afford the high-quality speakers with which the ATC deserves to be used, this is an excellent space-saving solution.

In the same issue I looked at just the kind of speakers to make the most of the system. Neat's Motive SX1 floorstanders are no larger than a pair of compact speakers on stands and yet deliver a sound that's both big and rich, and entirely captivating.

In March I was very taken with the little Roth OLi-RA1 speakers, which combine a bargain price with a sound that's honest and involving. If you've bought a compact



Stars of 2014 (clockwise from above): B&W CM8 S2, NAD D3020, Focal Easys, Devialet 170, Sony TA-A1ES



system and want to improve the sound, they're a perfect quick fix – and they'll only set you back £100.

Wireless speakers have been big news this year and the Focal Easys floorstanders are a fine example of the breed, as I found when reviewing them in the April issue. With digital amplification built into each speaker and a Hub to allow you to connect your source components, with digital and analogue inputs and aptX Bluetooth, the Easys system is a perfect 'wire-free' hi-fi set-up.

'In 2014 there was plenty to interest the audio and music enthusiast and I struggled to cover everything'

In May I finally got to grips with Sony's take on High-Resolution Audio in the form of the HAP-Z1ES player and TA-A1ES amplifier. I struggled a bit to get used to the need to copy music to the HAP-Z1ES before playback – I'm much more used to streaming from a NAS drive – but I found the real star of the show was the excellent TA-A1ES amplifier, with a lot of Sony amplifier heritage behind it and a powerful yet detailed sound.

Another innovative amplifier came along in June. Devialet's 170 – now upgraded

to the Devialet 200 – uses an analogue/digital hybrid design and is completely programmable using a browser-based interface and SD cards. You set up your amplifier on your computer, slot the card in the back and you're done. Devialet continues to innovate with its SAM speaker optimisation and the slimline black chrome amps are a refreshing change from the usual looks of high-end hardware.

In July I listened to the first of two exceptional speaker designs from Bowers & Wilkins. The 684 S2 is striking value, as well as being quite a looker in its slimline floorstanding cabinet, and the equivalent model from the upscale CM S2 range, the CM8 S2, proved even more impressive when I reviewed it last month. B&W is clearly on something of a roll at the moment.

In October and November I tested two amps very much 'on trend', both in being compact and offering a wide range of inputs including Bluetooth. The NAD D3020 is the latest version of a classic, best-selling design, while the Pro-ject MaiA is more conventional in form, and both fine-sounding and highly flexible.

That sounds like a pretty vintage year for hi-fi to me; and knowing some of the products lined up for forthcoming issue, I'm confident 2015 is going to be even better. **G**

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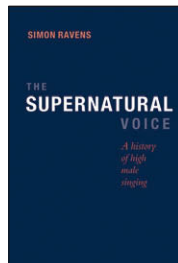
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Remembering Jansons père • Clara Butt's frock • How to end Bach's 'The Art of Fugue'

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Arvid Jansons the showman

Rob Cowan's enthusiastic review (Replay, November) of Arvid Jansons's Dresden recording of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony brought to mind a uniquely memorable performance of the work which he conducted with the Hallé Orchestra in Sheffield in 1972. Jansons – or Yansons as his name was then usually spelt – was a regular guest conductor with the orchestra, an imposing presence on the podium, and a riveting interpreter of Russian music, never more so than in this performance. Halfway through the March, he stopped conducting, folded his arms, smiled encouragingly at the players, and let them finish the movement under their own steam. It was showmanship on a sensational scale.

Stephen McClarence, via email

Dorati did it right in Detroit

Thank you for your 'Icons' article on my fellow Hungarian, Antal Dorati (November). I was surprised, however, at the short shrift given to his years at Detroit: '...as well as working with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.'

Yes, his tenure there was short, 1977-81, but he did much to develop the orchestra, took the ensemble on its first European tour, and their recording of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* won the Grand Prix du Disque in 1979. That's quite an achievement in such a short time.

George Orban, via email

'Finishing' The Art of Fugue

In reviewing two recent recordings of Bach's *The Art of Fugue* (October), Jed Distler wonders how Bach would react to a performance 'with the final fugue incomplete as he left it'. I imagine he would be mystified as to why the player didn't perform a completion of it. Some people may find it beautiful and moving to have the music suddenly stop but I find it irritating and frustrating – and also unnecessary. When we can't have a completion by the composer, the next best thing is one by a good scholar. Gustav Nottebohm discovered long ago that the motto theme combines with the other three and Donald Tovey worked it out in a beautiful completion which is far more satisfying than an abrupt

Letter of the Month



Fishtail or no fishtail? Clara Butt, who premiered *Sea Pictures*, pictured here in more informal surroundings

Was Clara Butt really dressed as a mermaid?

Reading the interview with Sarah Connolly on Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (November), I was astonished to find James Jolly repeating the ludicrous myth that at the premiere Clara Butt 'chose that evening to dress like a mermaid, complete with fishtail!' How anyone could seriously believe such nonsense is simply beyond me. The whole story stems from an almost certainly wilful misreading of the account of the premiere written by Elgar's host in Norwich, James Mottram, who actually wrote: 'Clara Butt had a wonderful dress, the material of which, it was whispered, indicated appropriately the scales of a mermaid's sinuous form.' In 1899 Butt was only 26; does it seem remotely likely that a singer at the start of her career would perform at what was probably the most important concert of her career to date dressed like something out of a pantomime?

Clara Butt was a great singer. Her florid technique was stunningly accomplished (just listen to her

recordings of 'Lusinghe più care' from Handel's *Alessandro* or 'Il segreto' from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*), her trill of outstanding quality (listen to her 'Ombra mai fu') and her way with text of surpassing communicative intensity (listen to any of her records, but particular favourites of mine are the 1927 'The Promise of Life' by Cowen, and Goodheart's 'A Fairy Went A-Marketing' from 1930). Her vocal style may be very different from any singer of today and much of her repertoire is completely out of fashion now but her qualities as a singer are manifest.

Paul Steinson, via email

James Jolly writes: In my defence, I would quote from a letter which Elgar – who, as conductor at the premiere of *Sea Pictures*, would have had a ring-side position – wrote to a friend following the concert in which he said that Butt 'had dressed like a mermaid'.

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breaking-off. (There are other completions but none as attractive.) Strangely, it has not been recorded since Tovey did so himself in the 1930s, though the Delmé Quartet's string-quartet transcription on Hyperion includes it.

I am waiting for a pianist to play it, and perhaps also to use some of the preludes Tovey suggested to introduce the fugues.

*Stephen Barber
Carterton, Oxon*

Bottesini and the double bass

I was astonished to see no mention in Philip Clark's otherwise excellent 'Specialist's Guide' to double bass concertos (November) of Giovanni Bottesini (1821-89), the Paganini of the double bass. Something of a globetrotter, Bottesini took his unwieldy instrument all round the world, gaining great popularity notably in France, Italy and America as well as in London where he played under Berlioz. Apart from his triumphs as a virtuoso performer, Bottesini was a conductor of European reputation, selected by Verdi to direct the first performance of *Aida* in Cairo in 1871. He composed six operas, an oratorio premiered at the Norwich Festival in 1887, 11 string quartets, a quintet for double bass and string quartet, and many works for the double bass, including two concertos for solo double bass, the *Gran Duo Concertante* for two double basses, *Passione Amorosa* for two double basses, and numerous pieces for double bass and piano. His instrument was a Testore built in 1716, and Bottesini was one of the first performers to adopt the French-style bow grip for the double bass.

*Christopher Follett
London NW3*

Waking up Wainwright

I've seen your editorial in the December issue on the importance of Christmas music and I've looked at your online prize draw, 'Vote for your favourite Christmas carol'. What an omission not to have *Christians Awake* on the list: an English composer too, J Wainwright, organist of St Mary's, the parish church of Stockport; and with words by John Byrom (who died in Manchester in 1763). I have a wonderful memory of hearing the Salvation Army band play it in Stockport in the late 1950s.

Ray Richardson, via email

Editorial note

In US Listings (December), we listed the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra's concert

with Augustin Dumay as being in New York on February 6 and 7. In fact, only the February 7 concert is at Carnegie Hall; the previous day, it's at Lafayette College in Easton, PA.

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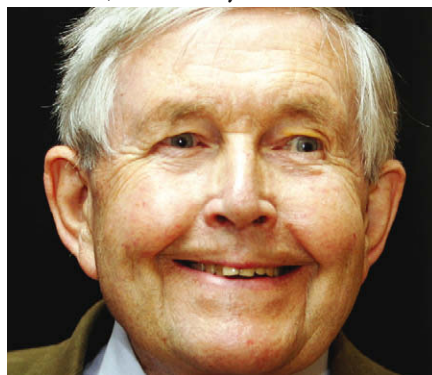
ARTHUR BUTTERWORTH

Composer

Born August 4, 1923

Died November 20, 2014

Born in Manchester, Arthur Butterworth studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music (now the Royal Northern



College of Music) from 1947 to 1949, where he focused on composition, trumpet and conducting. He played the trumpet in both the Scottish National Orchestra (1949-55) and the Hallé (1955-62) before becoming a freelance musician. In 1963, he started to teach at the Huddersfield School of Music, during which time he both composed and conducted (from 1964, he was conductor of the Huddersfield Philharmonic – a post he held for 30 years).

Butterworth never abandoned the music that first attracted him to the profession – music for brass band. He was Music Director of the National Youth Brass Band from 1975 to 1981, and he wrote extensively for the genre including, as a commission from the Black Dyke Band, a symphony called *Odin* – a work that also drew on his passion for the north of England. Among 20th-century symphonists, Butterworth greatly admired Sibelius and Nielsen; he also studied informally with Ralph Vaughan Williams in the early 1950s.

Butterworth's output includes seven symphonies (Barbirolli recorded No 1 at the Proms in 1958, now coupled with a new recording of No 4 and the Viola Concerto on the Dutton Epoch label, 8/09), eight concertos, a large amount of music for brass band, songs and half-a-dozen choral works.

NEXT MONTH FEBRUARY 2015



Remembering Jacqueline du Pré

Fifty years ago, the English cellist made her iconic recording of Elgar's Cello Concerto.

Sarah Kirkup talks to Daniel Barenboim, Stephen Kovacevich and others who were close to her about why this unique musician still deserves to be celebrated

Unscrabbling Scriabin

In this, the centenary year of the Russian composer's death, Geoffrey Norris re-examines Scriabin's piano and orchestral music and demystifies his genius

Finding Franck

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K		Song Without Words, Op 109	48	et desiderabunt mori...	73	Sheng			Weir		
Keeley		Symphony No 3	34	Miserere	73		Seven Tunes Heard in China	63		Ave regina caelorum	79
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Marimba Concertos – No 1; No 2;		Celeste beneficium	80	How fair this spot, Op 21 No 7	79		No 8, Allerseelen	79		Zadro, M	
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Roger Allam

One of the UK's most versatile actors, who has appeared in everything from Shakespeare to *The Thick of It*, on combining words and music

Iwent to Christ's Hospital school, which has a very good music reputation, and sang in the choir there. We sang for services and also special choral concerts – we did Handel's *Messiah* when my voice had broken, and I did the baritone solos. There was also a madrigal choir and we went on choir trips to France, Holland and Belgium.

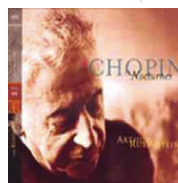
I'd say I probably listened to music more then than I do now. It's now very much more difficult with family life – my children are quite young – to have the space to just listen to music. I started listening to everything really – the first 20th-century composers that I could get to grips with were Debussy and Ravel, because I suppose I found it easy to hear what was going on, whereas with more contemporary stuff it was more difficult to listen to. I heard *The Rite of Spring* when I was 14 or so and it just sounded like a noise, but a couple of years later, when I heard it at a Prom, it was thrilling.

When I was at school Rubinstein did a solo recital at the Royal Albert Hall for schoolchildren, and it was absolutely packed. The sight of this old man – he must have been well into his 80s – producing such power and feeling at the piano is something I'll never forget. I still listen to his Chopin often.

I used to go the Proms quite a lot when I was at university, and at that time Boulez was conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. He had that great ability to make you hear things in a different way – even with something that had a big Romantic wash of sound he could pick things out with great clarity.

While at university I used to have singing lessons with the vocal consultant at English National Opera. He was a lovely man called John Hargreaves – I think he'd sung with Sadlers Wells Opera. He was extremely encouraging and very, very nice – he charged me £2 an hour, and I know it was a long time ago but that was nothing really. He had this little room off the upper circle in the Coliseum, and I'd come out and sometimes they were rehearsing, and I would sit in the darkness of the upper circle and watch them. (One time I came out and Nureyev was rehearsing on stage so I sat and watched him – wonderful!) It's been very useful for singing musicals but also for having the basic kind of rudiments of how to project your voice and how to fill a big room.

At the Globe one of the rules is no amplification. I like that very much because I like the theatre as much as possible remaining to do with the human voice and it being an acoustic instrument. And actually, if you can ignore the planes going on overhead, the Globe is actually a very good acoustic instrument. Sometimes we do midnight 'matinees' there and at night the acoustic is absolutely miraculous, it's



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wonderful. I love the fact the music there is all acoustic and it has a presence in the shows that is never like film music, it's not that kind of music that you can get in more conventional theatre productions where there can be an underscoring that's telling you what to feel. I think there is music in the production at the Globe when it is demanded by the text – and *The Tempest* in particular demands that there is music.

Over the years I've worked in classical music pieces a number of times, including things like a full production of Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival some years ago, with William Christie, or with John Eliot Gardiner doing a concert performance of *Oberon*, or with Mark Elder at Manchester a couple of times. I've also done recitals with Trevor Pinnock at the Wanamaker Theatre, a programme of Elizabethan music and words, and I'm doing a couple of recitals with Angela Hewitt – I did *Facade* at her Trasimeno Festival this year. So music continues to play a part in my life – and while I don't play it, the combination of words and music, and working with classical musicians, is a most wonderful and inspiring pleasure. **G**

Roger Allam stars as Prospero in *The Tempest* (Opus Arte), part of the 'Globe on Screen' DVD series; visit shakespearesglobe.com



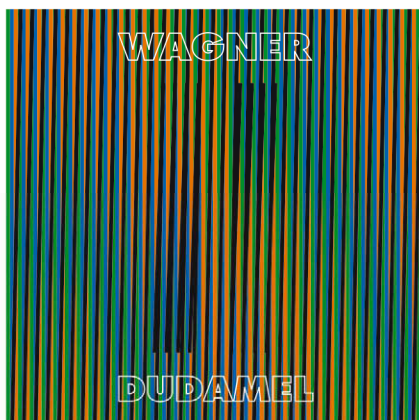
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